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# THE HILLTOP TROOP



ARTHUR STANWOOD PIER

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# THE HILLTOP TROOP

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ARTHUR STANWOOD PIER

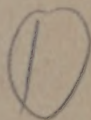




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## THE HILLTOP TROOP









THEY CAUGHT SIGHT OF A FIGURE DISAPPEARING  
AMONG THE TREES (PAGE 125)

# THE HILLTOP TROOP

*By*  
ARTHUR STANWOOD PIER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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# THE HILLTOP TROOP

## I

### THE GANG FROM THE HOLLOW

THE HILLTOP TENNIS CLUB possessed two dirt courts and a tiny clubhouse with a veranda, where on Saturday afternoons the wives and mothers of the members were accustomed to sit and have tea. It was in a secluded spot; a lane led up to it from the road and passed through a jungle of alders and blackberry bushes; behind the clubhouse and on two sides of the courts there was a bit of woodland. The trees, the blackberries, and the strip of green lawn between clubhouse and courts made the place a favorite rendezvous for birds, no less than for tennis players; and one sitting on the clubhouse veranda could hear mingling with the pleasant twang of racquet and thud of ball the fluting notes of bluebird and oriole and robin.

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One afternoon in July Frank Bartlett and Jim Woods were absorbed in a desperate contest on the courts. They were evenly matched, they had each won a set, the score was three all on the third set, they both were streaming with perspiration and playing their best, when there was a rude intrusion upon their pleasure. Six boys, two about their own age, which was seventeen, and the others younger, emerged from the thicket of alder and blackberry and stood in the lane close to the wire netting that enclosed the tennis courts. The younger boys were barefoot, all were bareheaded, with hair wet and disheveled; evidently they had just come from swimming in the mill pond that lay at the foot of the western slope of the hill. Presumably they were now on their way home to the Hollow, which was at the foot of the eastern slope. That they lived in the Hollow the raggedness of their attire indicated.

For a moment or two they stood looking on in silence, and Jim Woods, who always appreciated the presence of a "gallery,"

## THE GANG FROM THE HOLLOW

put even more speed into his slashing strokes. He won a hotly contested point with a brilliant drive into a corner, and felt, as he settled himself somewhat complacently to receive the next serve, that the spectators were looking on with respect and admiration. Wishing to impress them still further, when the swift serve came, instead of playing it safe he took a great swipe at it — with the result that the ball sailed through the air and struck the back net about a foot from the top.

At once there was amused laughter from the spectators.

“Go to it, cully, go to it!” cried one of the younger boys encouragingly. “Hit him again!”

“Once more!” urged another. “Show your muscle, Charley!”

Nettled by the ridicule when he had imagined respect, and by the familiar mode of address, Jim looked angrily at the grinning faces and said, “Oh, shut up!”

Of course the result of that remark was to insure a flow of sarcasm and jeering com-

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ment. During the next rally, which was long and well fought, an incessant stream of advice, encouragement, and criticism played upon Jim. "Addaboy, addaboy!" "Run, you black-haired lunk!" "Hit it, Charley, old top!" "Addaboy, addaboy, addaboy!" "O gee, what a mutt!"

This last when Jim, trying to smash a short lob with the utmost violence, pounded it into the net.

As he was picking up the ball, Frank Bartlett said in a low voice, "Don't pay any attention to them, Jim."

But although Jim followed this advice, there was now no cessation of the ironical applause from the "gallery." The boys outside the wire netting had started a competition in witticisms; they egged one another on; they tried with shrillness of utterance to command one another's attention. "Charley boy!" and "Charley dear!" they cried. "Jump, you big stiff, jump!" "Say, you crab, we're looking at you!"

Under those taunts Jim's self-possession deserted him. He set his teeth and slammed

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the ball with fury; it went wild, and Frank won the game. Then Jim stooped, picked up another ball, and drove it with sudden violence at the wire netting behind which were clustered his tormentors. The act provoked a shout of laughter. One of the two older boys, who had hitherto not joined in the chorus of jeers, but had stood looking and listening with amusement, now grinned and remarked, "Gee, that was a kid thing to do!"

Jim glared at him; the fact that he was a rather good-natured-looking fellow and seemed openly amused enraged Jim more than a display of malevolence might have done. "You dirty muckers," said Jim, "to hang around a gentlemen's club and make yourselves a nuisance —"

"Move us on, then!" retorted the boy to whom Jim had addressed the remark; he had reddened now with anger. "Come ahead, if you don't like us out here on the road, where we've a right to be; come ahead. Let's see you move us on."

Jim stood undecided; he felt quite ready



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for a fight, but the odds were six against two, and it was unreasonable to suppose that such a gang would be animated by any spirit of fair play.

"The gentleman's thinking it over!" cried the boy whose voice had been shrillest and most exasperating. "Give him time, Mike, give him time!"

He looked so much like the older boy that he was clearly his brother, but whereas Mike's face was open and good-natured, the youngster's was sharpened and elfish.

"You're right, Dick," said Mike. "We'll give him time."

Frank Bartlett called to Jim, and the two tennis players conferred together.

"Never mind their yelling at us," Frank said. "It's foolish to talk back. Let's just keep on playing, and they'll get sick of their noise."

"I'd like to go out and clean up the bunch," said Jim angrily.

"Yes, but they're too many for us. Just keep hold of yourself and play the game."

He passed a couple of balls over to Jim in

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order that he might serve. Jim walked back to his place on the base line, and the derisive comment that had for a few moments been hushed in curiosity and anticipation broke out anew. It was not particularly witty comment, but it was loud and personal; it covered peculiarities of Jim's gait and appearance, it reflected upon his skill as a tennis player, and it intimated contempt for his character and disposition. Jim was both enraged and "rattled." He wanted to play so brilliantly that the taunts should be silenced; and he wanted to show Frank Bartlett that he could be cool and indifferent under annoyance. The very intensity of his desires defeated their fulfillment; he lost the next two games and with them the set.

Frank Bartlett started to change courts and said as he came up to the net, "Play another?"

Jim shook his head. "I'm done; I've had enough."

The spectators heard and jeered. "Quitter! Quitter!"

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Frank looked disappointed; he would have liked to play longer. "If you pay no attention to them, they'll soon get tired and go away," he suggested in a low tone.

"No," Jim replied obstinately. "I'm through."

He began to take down the net, and Frank proceeded to assist him.

"Charley, I hope we have n't spoiled your game." The remark, addressed in a solicitous tone by the younger boy who was called Dick, amused the spectators.

"He has n't got any game that you could spoil," suggested another.

Frank and Jim quietly folded up the net and then carried it into the clubhouse. Jim talked of what he would have done if there had been only one or two tormentors instead of half a dozen.

The half-dozen followed Jim and Frank down the lane and out into the broad, elm-shaded street along which, behind hedges or wooden fences, were the lawns and houses of the most prosperous people of the town. Jim bade his friend good-bye and turned in

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at the gateway to a square, yellow colonial house.

“Good-bye, Charley!” called the offensive voices behind.

“Will you be playing tennis again tomorrow, Charley?” asked the most offensive voice of all, that of the sharp-featured Dick. “We’d like to come up and root for you.”

Jim gave no evidence that he had heard. The gang listened at the gate until he had disappeared within the house. Then they sauntered on in the wake of the other tennis player.

Frank lived two houses beyond Jim; there were spacious grounds separating the houses from one another.

Frank walked so slowly that soon the gang drew up close behind him. He reached his own gate and then stopped and waited for the gang. Leaning against the closed gate with his elbows resting on the top of it and his racket tucked under one arm, he waited impassively. He had a pleasant but determined-looking mouth and level, dark eyes in which lurked now a humorous

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twinkle; his brown, bare forearms were muscular; his shirt, open at the throat, showed the top of a stalwart chest; altogether, he was a firmly made, solid-looking fellow, and he had planted himself in an attitude of ease and composure.

As the gang approached, straggling out across the sidewalk, he kept his eyes turned toward them. They drew near, grinning, yet obviously enough not with derision so much as with embarrassment. Some of them cast down their eyes under Frank's lightly inquiring, mildly scoffing gaze. Two of them met it with hardihood — the older fellow, who had not joined very much in the taunts, and the younger, who was evidently his brother and had been most fertile in abuse.

"What you looking at, cully?" asked the younger boy defiantly.

Frank made no answer, only continued to look. And just because he had that magic thing, personality, and could stand so unperturbed and gaze with such apparently tolerant raillery in his eyes, the gang strag-



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gled by, ill at ease. He held the strategic position; they had to pass in review before him. And he reviewed them, glanced from one to another with the same slightly satirical, inquiring, not unfriendly smile, and caused them, one after another, to shift or lower their gaze. Even the youngster with the ready tongue, getting no reply to his question except the amused glance, found no more words, and went by in silence.

Then abruptly the older brother turned and came up to Frank; and the others halted in surprise and drew near.

"We wanted to see you play," said the boy. "We didn't mean to break up your game."

"Did you think you were helping it along?" Frank's voice was mildly ironical.

"It was just a kind of accident that got us started. And then when the fellow was so easy to get a rise out of — well, you couldn't expect us to stop after that."

"*You* didn't do much of it," observed Frank. "None at all, I think."

"Oh, well, I'm older; but you know how

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it is when a fellow shows he's an easy mark: everybody likes to take a crack at him."

"I'll tell him what you've said; it will make him feel better about you. What's your name?"

"Michael Dorr."

"I'm Frank Bartlett. I don't remember seeing you before."

"We just came here to live last month."

"Is this fellow your brother?"

Frank pointed at Dick with a good-natured rudeness, and Dick grinned, not displeased.

"Yes, that's who he is."

"Bright, but fresh, I guess," observed Frank; and Dick grinned again. "These other kids — been spending the day looking after them, seeing they did n't get drowned?"

The boy muttered that they could all swim well enough; and another said *he* did n't need anybody to look after *him*.

"I guess," continued Frank, "that if they're round with you enough, they'll learn to behave better sometime. It does n't

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seem to have done Dick much good, though. I have a young cousin about Dick's age, and I'm often as ashamed of him as you must be of Dick. I guess it's probably the age."

He looked thoughtfully at Dick and then at the four who were about Dick's age. They squirmed or rubbed their bare feet on the grass border by the fence or grinned with an effort to show that under criticism they were unconcerned.

"I bet you know how to handle him." Michael Dorr spoke with some admiration; also, as he glanced at his gang, there was a twinkle in his eye.

"I know how, all right; but you can't do with a cousin what you can with a brother. It makes too much trouble. And besides, you don't have the same interest in his improvement. Look, there he is now."

They all turned their heads in the direction in which Frank was pointing. A boy of fourteen or fifteen was languidly coming down the steps of the big brick house across the way. His hands were in his pockets,

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and he advanced one foot before the other with a loitering deliberation that suggested absence of purpose. He was carefully and even floridly dressed; his long trousers — to which he was not yet quite habituated — were creased to perfection, and were turned up at the bottom to display the elegance of his ankles and reveal a pair of scarlet socks. Spotless white shoes adorned his feet, a straw hat was tipped at a jaunty angle on his head, and a necktie matching his socks contributed the last touch of color to his radiance. His face was less impressive than his clothes, in fact, was dominated by them, and appeared at such a distance merely something small and white.

“Reggie!” called Frank. “Some fellows here that would like to meet you! Come over!”

Reggie stopped at the foot of the steps and did not advance down the gravel walk to the street. He surveyed the group deliberately.

“What for?” he inquired at last in a suspicious voice.

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"Oh, just to oblige us," responded his cousin.

Reggie scrutinized the gathering for a few moments and then, without remark, sauntered off round the corner of the house and disappeared.

"You see," — Frank addressed Michael Dorr — "his manners are just about like your kid brother's. I guess maybe you've got your brother a little better in hand, in spite of the way he's acted. Well, good-bye, Dorr. I'm glad to have seen you; I hope we'll meet again soon."

He shook hands with Michael Dorr, ignored the others, and opening the gate walked up to his house. That he had achieved a victory he knew when he entered with no taunts following him.

Meanwhile Michael Dorr was enforcing the lesson for his brother.

"He's dead right; you're too fresh," said Michael. "It's all well enough to be smart, if you're not too smart. He gave you a good call-down, all you fellows."

"Ah!" replied Dick, in whom the "call-



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down” rankled. “He’s a stiff, that’s what he is. And the other fellow was a nut. And the kid across the street, he’s a sissy. He felt too proud to come over and speak to us. I’ll get his goat some day for that.” He spoke with vindictiveness.

“You just leave him for his cousin to deal with,” counseled Michael. Then, as they sauntered along, he changed the subject. “It must be great to live in one of these big places up here.”

“I bet they have good things to eat,” remarked one of the boys.

Another boy snickered, and murmured in Dick’s ear, “I bet they have.”

Dick looked at him sharply, and the boy winked.

“What do you mean, Tom?” asked Dick, drawing closer for the reply.

“Raspberries — up at Reggie’s place,” said Tom. “I go up there every morning and have a great feed. There’s a garden back of the house, and the man never comes till about seven o’clock; all you have to do is get up early enough.”

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"I'll go up with you to-morrow," announced Dick.

"You'd better not let Mike know."

"I won't; you need n't be afraid."

Michael, walking slowly behind and trying to imagine what the life of such a fellow as Frank Bartlett must be, was giving little attention to Dick and to the other boys. He had reached an age of discontent and aspiration; he had a better mind and a stronger body than most boys of his acquaintance; he was beginning to feel aware of capabilities unused and apparently not desired; he wanted, more than anything else, to get a start in life. How splendid to be like Frank before whom, of course, a multitude of opportunities lay open!

Meanwhile, Frank had taken his shower bath, come downstairs, and found his mother and sister entertaining his cousin Reggie with lemonade and cake out on the side porch.

"Hello, Reg!" he said. "What was the matter with you? Why didn't you come over when I called?"

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"I didn't see why I should," replied Reggie. "What did you want, anyway?"

"There was a fellow in that crowd that reminded me of you, and I wanted you two to see each other."

"How was he like me?" asked Reggie with a challenge in his voice. "Of course there was n't any one in that crowd that was like me."

"What crowd?" asked Frank's sister, Elizabeth. "What are you two going to scrap about now?"

"Frank had a gang of regular muckers he was talking with out there by the gate," complained Reggie. "He wanted me to come over and meet them. I don't know why."

"You looked so pretty, I thought you'd be glad to show yourself to them," began Frank; but his mother checked him.

"Frank, you must not be always picking on your cousin. Reggie, will you have some more lemonade? That's right; Frank will pass your glass. Now, who were these boys that Reggie is talking about?"

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"Just a bunch of fellows that stopped to watch Jim and me playing tennis. They followed along behind us when we came home, and I stopped and talked with them. One of them was quite a good fellow; one of the others made me think of Reggie."

"Frank!" His mother's voice was sharp, but her eyes twinkled. So did Elizabeth's.

"I don't believe it," Reggie complained. "Why, Aunt Adelaide, they were the worst-looking, ragged hoodlums you ever saw — awful-looking muckers, right out of the Hollow. Frank's just trying to get a rise out of me, saying that one of them was like me."

"He reminded me of you a lot. I wish you had been playing tennis with Jim this afternoon, Reggie. I'd like to have seen it."

"Why, what happened?"

"It would have been more fun than a goat. Oh, well!" Frank did not choose to explain his obscure remark. He sat back and looked at his cousin with amused eyes.

Reggie returned to his chief grievance.

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"How was the fellow like me? What made you say he was like me?"

"Well, he was a persistent kind of a pest, for one thing."

"Frank!" His mother's eyes no longer twinkled.

"If Reggie insists, I've got to tell him the truth, haven't I?"

"I should n't think, Aunt Adelaide, you'd want to have Frank talking with such awful toughs. I know mother would n't want me to associate with them."

"Maybe she won't let you come over here any more when you tell her how I've been corrupted," suggested Frank hopefully.

"I guess she won't mind my coming over to see Aunt Adelaide and Elizabeth. They're the ones I come to see, anyway. Say, Frank, what was the fellow like that you said was like me?"

Elizabeth giggled and her mother smiled.

"I'll point him out to you some day," Frank said.

Reginald, having drained his glass, rose to take his leave. "Of course I know he



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could n't be like me in the least; of course I know you're just trying to tease me," he said; "but I don't care."

After Reginald had sauntered down the path to the gate, Mrs. Bartlett said:

"Frank, why is it that you're always so disagreeable to Reggie?"

"I don't know; he gets my goat," Frank answered. "I never mean to start things when he's around, but I simply can't help it."

"You take him too hard; if you'd just see the humor of him," suggested Elizabeth.

"That would be all right if he was n't a cousin; it's awful to have a cousin like that," replied Frank. "He's hopeless; it doesn't matter what you say or do, he's hopeless."

Reggie had been gone but a few minutes when a young man turned in at the gate. Elizabeth, bending over her sewing, pretended not to observe him; Frank rose with a sigh and said, "O gee, now I've got to chase myself! Come, mother."

Elizabeth tightened her lips and did not

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

look up from her sewing until the young man was mounting the steps and Frank was disappearing within the house.

"Hello, Elizabeth! Wait a moment, Frank."

The young man had a pleasant smile and a pleasant voice; moreover, he was tall, broad-shouldered, good-looking — the type of young man that might reasonably win the liking and confidence of either a girl or a boy.

"I've got a scheme, Frank, and you've got to help me out with it." His dark eyes were shining with enthusiasm. "I'm going to apply for a commission as Scout Master and I want to organize the finest troop of Boy Scouts you ever saw. This is just the place for it, and it's a funny thing that nobody has yet worked up to it. Right in this neighborhood, on the Hill, there are enough fellows to make two patrols. I've made out a list. I want you to be one patrol leader, and I thought of asking Jim Woods to be the other. What do you say?"

"Fine idea," replied Frank. "I've never

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looked into the Scout business very much, Mr. Winton. What do we do?"

"Oh, we'll have weekly hikes and meetings, camp out, learn all sorts of outdoor tricks; but it's more than just having a good time. The idea is to discipline ourselves into being better citizens. And now here's the point I have especially in mind. Although I want to start the troop with just some of you fellows on the Hill, I want, as soon as it's well organized and amounts to something, to work in a couple of patrols made up of fellows from down in the Hollow. I think doing that will be a good thing for both ends of the town. The feud between the Hill and the Hollow seems to me to be getting steadily worse. Fellows from the Hollow steal bats and balls from the little kids up here in summer, and take their sleds from them in winter. They rob apple orchards and vegetable gardens. On the other hand, some of the fellows up here go out of their way to be insulting to the boys of the Hollow. I believe that if we can get both gangs working together in a Boy-Scout

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troop, it will be a good thing for every one."

"There's no doubt about it," said Frank, "if you can do it. I know one fellow in the Hollow that it would be well to get hold of — a fellow named Mike Dorr. He'd be a good patrol leader; but I don't believe Jim Woods would go into the Scouts if Dorr was to be in it, too, not just at first, anyway. They've had a kind of scrap and Jim is sore."

"My idea was to get the fellows up here interested and well started in the movement before suggesting that they take in the gang from the Hollow. Once they get interested they may see the advantage of enlarging the membership. So I'll say nothing to Jim or to the others about the ultimate purpose."

"What fellows are you going to ask?"

"Oh, those right round here. The two Nevins boys and Nate Folwell and your cousin Reggie, and —"

"There's just one thing, Mr. Winton," interrupted Frank. "If Reggie's to be in this thing, I don't want him in my patrol. I'll

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take anybody else you choose to give me, but I won't have Reggie."

"What's the matter? Had a row?"

Both Elizabeth and her mother looked amused, but Frank was clearly in earnest.

"Oh, I don't have rows with the kid," he said disdainfully; "but he does n't take bossing from me the way he should, and if I had to boss him right along I'd be liable to do something to him. Give him to Jim."

"A gift for Jim," said Mr. Winton, making a note in a little book. "I hope he'll be grateful."

"Poor Reggie!" said Mrs. Bartlett. "And suppose he simply declines to join the Scouts?"

"Oh, then," said Frank, "I'll make him."



## II

### REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY IN HIS DIARY

IT proved unnecessary for Frank to enforce his cousin's membership in the Boy Scouts. The idea of work, of study, and of activity did not particularly appeal to Reggie; but neither did the idea of being omitted from any organization of his contemporaries. And having a somewhat unusual fondness for personal adornment, he found the thought of the uniform attractive. He felt that he would look well in khaki. As for what he regarded as the drudgery of the Boy-Scout system, learning signaling, woodcraft, all that sort of thing, he simply did not intend to do it. There were a few things that he did have to learn before he could be admitted to the organization as a "tenderfoot." It took him only a short time to commit to memory the Scout law and the history of the na-

## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

tional flag, for he never was troubled when it came to learning things out of books; but he spent a whole afternoon trying to tie four of the knots that were required, and even then he was not sure that he should not bungle the bowline under examination.

One evening two weeks after Herbert Winton had announced his plan, sixteen boys assembled at his house for the Scout examination. He ushered them into his study, a big room that had bookshelves at one end, a huge open fireplace at one side, and fishing-rods, modern guns, quaint old firearms and pictures of horses and dogs on the walls. It was a room that suggested both the sportsman and the student; there were things in it to fascinate every sort of boy. Winton allowed his guests to roam about and inspect his possessions; he took the old guns from the walls and explained their mechanism and their history, and he recounted episodes that had made his fishing-rods dear to him.

But at last he said, "Now, for the ex-

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amination. Frank, we'll begin with you. What is the Scout law?"

Frank Bartlett stood up and recited: "A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent."

"What is the Scout motto?"

"Be Prepared," Frank answered.

"Here is a first-class Scout badge." Mr. Winton placed upon the table a bronze design suggesting a combination of arrowhead and *fleur-de-lis*, with a scroll bearing the Scout motto from which hung a knotted cord. "Explain its significance."

"The trefoil refers to the three points in the Scout oath," said Frank. "The scroll is turned up at the ends like a Scout's mouth, because he does his duty with a smile and willingly. The knot is to remind the Scout to do a good turn to some one daily."

Next Mr. Winton questioned Frank about the national flag, its history and the forms of respect due to it. And after that he placed before him on the table two lengths of cord and told him to tie four out of a

## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

number of specified knots. Frank performed the task deftly.

"Raise your hand, making the Scout sign, and take the oath."

Frank held up his right hand with three fingers raised, and said:

"On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and to my country, and to obey the Scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight."

To the other boys, listening in silence as Frank repeated the words, the occasion had suddenly taken on an unexpected solemnity. Even though they had all studied the oath and the Scout law, it had not before occurred to them that joining the Boy Scouts of America was really a serious thing.

"You're entitled now to wear the tenderfoot badge," said Mr. Winton, and he took from his pocket a bronze pin, which represented the upper part of the full Scout design, and fastened it to the lapel of Frank's coat. "Now, Jim, you're next."

Jim Woods passed an equally satisfactory

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examination and was also decorated with the badge. Then one after another was called forward and put through the test. A few had to be prompted, but no one failed, not even Reggie in the knot-tying, although he had to fumble over the bowline before he got it right. When the last badge had been bestowed, the atmosphere of tense earnestness that had prevailed seemed to relax.

"I don't know how I'm going to do a good deed every day," observed Jack Watson. "I should think a fellow might go for weeks without any chance turning up."

"You've got to keep your eyes more open for chances," said Mr. Winton.

"I know of one!" cried Reggie eagerly. "There's some mucker from the Hollow that comes up every night and robs our garden. If some of you fellows would catch him, you'd be doing mother and me a good turn."

At the shout of laughter that followed this speech, Reggie looked astonished.

"You certainly are a bird, Reggie," remarked Jim Woods. Contempt was ill-con-



## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

cealed in his tone. "Or did you mean that as a joke?"

"Joke nothing," replied Reggie in a plaintive, high-pitched voice. "I guess if you had a fine raspberry patch and then got scarcely a raspberry, you'd think it was no joke."

"Although the language of the book calls for a good deed every day, I have no doubt that a good deed by night would be equally acceptable," said Mr. Winton gravely. "So if any of you boys will volunteer to keep a night watch over Reggie's raspberries —"

There was another shout of laughter, but it left Reggie unperturbed. His mind was working in its own channels.

"Yes," he said; "and if a bunch of you fellows could catch that thief and hold him until I got a policeman, why, I guess you'd be doing a good deed to everybody else on the Hill — not just us."

"It must be wonderful to have such a brain, Reggie," remarked Jack Watson.

"There are so few policemen in this town," continued Reggie, "that I think Scouts

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

might be of a lot of use in just those ways. Mother says she never can find a policeman when she wants one."

"And now she'll have a Scout close by always, so she'll never need to call a policeman," said Jim Woods. "Why don't you just go out and nab that thief yourself, Reggie?"

"Of course if there was only one, I might," Reggie began, and was at once interrupted.

"But you've mentioned only one."

"Well, I don't know how many there are, but I bet there's a regular gang."

"You fellows can arrange later just what you will do to help Reggie out of his troubles," said Mr. Winton. "Now I'm going to divide you into two patrols — eight to a patrol. I'm going to appoint Frank Bartlett leader of the first patrol and Jim Woods leader of the second. In Frank's patrol there will be Jack Watson, Bob Dunham, Clifford Greene, George Kennedy, Jasper Bryce, Ted McGregor and Francis Platt. The rest of you will all go into the second patrol under Jim Woods."

## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

There was a murmur of comment, and then Jim Woods said:

"Mr. Winton, have n't you made one mistake? I suppose you meant Reggie to go into Frank's patrol, being his cousin."

"No," said Mr. Winton, "I thought the arrangement I have just announced was the better."

"If Reggie had come into my patrol," explained Frank, "the other fellows would probably always be accusing me of favoritism."

There was a general chuckle, but it did not disperse the gloom on Jim Wood's face.

Reggie, pursuing the current of his own thoughts and oblivious of slights, appealed to the Scout Master.

"Can I get my uniform to-morrow, Mr. Winton?"

"Yes, I've already registered the troop, and I'll give you a certificate that will permit you to buy the uniform at any time now."

"I guess, then, I'll go in to the city to-morrow and get fitted out," said Reggie.

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His cousin and Jim Woods looked at him in silent disgust.

Then Frank and Jim glanced at each other, and from the smile on Frank's face Jim received sudden enlightenment. He moved nearer to his friend and said in a low voice:

"Frank, I'll bet you wished that young cousin of yours on to me."

"Sure I did," replied Frank, "and I'd have expected you to do the same sort of thing by me if he'd been your cousin."

"Mr. Winton might at least have had us draw lots for him."

"Cheer up. He may turn out to be the prize-winner of the whole troop."

Jim sniffed and looked gloomily at his newly acquired and undesirable comrade. He had always had an even stronger antipathy to Reggie than most of the boys.

"Now," said Mr. Winton, addressing the whole gathering, "there are just a few suggestions I want to make to you fellows. We'll all meet here once a week—Friday evening, if that is a convenient time for

## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

you?" He glanced round and received only nods of assent. "Very well, then; every Friday evening in this room at eight o'clock. Every Saturday afternoon we'll go for a hike. We'll learn to make maps and to do a little signaling and to render first aid. Most of you will want to graduate from the tenderfoot class into the second-class Scout; you can do it in a month if you apply yourselves to the effort; but there's something more that I want to talk to you about."

He paused and glanced over his audience; they all were listening, with the obvious exception of Reggie, who had taken a book on Africa down from one of the shelves and was looking at the pictures in it. Mr. Winton continued, without making any special attempt to fix Reggie's attention:

"There's your general attitude toward people and things that I hope you'll consider a little more carefully, now that you're enrolled as Scouts. You ought to be particularly careful not to commit acts in any way discreditable or unworthy, for such acts reflect not only on you but on the organiza-



## THE HILLTOP TROOP

tion to which you have pledged your loyalty. For example, in your relations with other boys — those living in the Hollow, let us say — you ought now to try to cultivate a spirit of friendliness and forbearance rather than one of hostility. I don't mean that you should go out of your way, but merely that you should adopt a more generous attitude of mind. That's just for the sake of illustration. Now another thing. I'm scarcely more experienced in scoutcraft than you are; you'll have therefore to be forbearing with me and give me your help. I'm sure we shall all have a lot of fun together, and I expect to get quite as much profit out of this experience as you do."

They all applauded, and even Reggie, desisting for a moment from the turning of the pages, clapped his hands once or twice.

It was perhaps unfortunate that Reggie had not paid closer attention to the Scout Master's speech; perhaps, on the other hand, if he had, it would not have affected his behavior. At any rate, two days later about eleven o'clock in the morning, when

## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

he was sauntering down the street in the neighborhood of his home, an opportunity to perform a good deed presented itself. A butcher's boy driving his cart up the hill, which here was quite steep, stopped his horse, turning him out from the curb at an angle, so that the weight of the wagon should not pull too heavily, and started to make a short cut across Mrs. Watson's lawn to her back door.

"Hi, there!" cried Reggie. "Hi, there!"

The boy, parcel in hand, stopped and looked round; the shout was peremptory. Reggie stood on the sidewalk with his hands in his pockets and spoke severely.

"You oughtn't to go across people's lawns. Don't you know what paths are for?"

The butcher's boy, who happened to be Michael Dorr, gazed at him in anger and amazement.

"You don't live here, do you?" he asked.

"No," replied Reggie.

"Then mind your own business, will you?"

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"It is my business," asserted Reggie. "It's the business of every fellow that's a Scout to protect people's property."

Michael made no reply, although he glared at Reggie for a moment contemptuously. Then he carried his parcel round to the back door of the house. Reggie, standing in the shade of a maple that overhung the sidewalk, waited for him to reappear; he was morally certain that Michael would again commit the act of trespass, and he was determined in that event to administer again to him the appropriate reproof.

Up to a certain point Reggie's intuitions about human action and reaction were remarkably acute; but at that point they always failed lamentably.

Michael came round the corner of the house, and immediately on seeing Reggie left the path and walked across the grass toward him. Reggie called out:

"I bet you'd get off that grass quick enough if Mr. Watson was to come along!"

Without answering, but with a formidable visage, Michael advanced toward Reggie;

## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

and as he continued this ominous advance, Reggie felt stirrings of alarm.

"Where you going to?" he asked; and he retreated out from under the maple.

"I'm going to put you off the walk," replied Michael truculently. "And I'll walk across anybody's grass, any time, anywhere, just to put you off the sidewalk and into the gutter."

"Ho!" said Reggie; but there was only a quaver of defiance in the utterance.

The next moment he took to his heels and ran at top speed up the road. His antagonist laughed derisively. "Run, you little coward!" he shouted. "You're a great Scout! Keep on running!"

He did not pursue the fugitive, but turned to mount his cart.

Reggie, glancing back over his shoulder and seeing that he was to escape chastisement, gave way to one of those impulses that made him detested by the boys who knew him best. He caught up a couple of stones and let one of them fly with all his strength; the one thing that he could do really well was to throw a stone.

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

The missile went swift and true to the mark; it struck Michael on the leg as he was clambering to his seat, and he dropped to the ground with a cry of pain and anger. He was not badly hurt, for he turned and started to run at his tormentor, whereupon Reggie hurled the other stone.

It missed the boy and hit the horse just above the fetlock, on the foreleg. Thus cruelly awakened, the animal made a frantic leap sidewise, overturned the wagon and, dragging it on its side, plunged down the hill. The contents of the wagon were strewn along the road — potatoes, corn, carrots, melons, raspberries and parcels of meat. Fortunately, the vehicle acted as a brake on the frightened old horse and slowed him down before he had gone far.

In the moment of the disaster the driver abandoned his design of vengeance and, whirling about, ran shouting after the horse. Reggie, relieved of the fear of punishment, yet somewhat scared by the havoc that he had caused, darted across Mrs. Jenkins's lawn, heedless of the precepts that he had



## REGGIE MAKES AN ENTRY

so recently expounded, ran through Mrs. Grant's garden and thence laid his course through neighboring back yards for home.

Safely arrived, he did not immediately regain his customary quietude of mind; he wished there were no possibility of his ever encountering that butcher's boy again and wondered whether it would be safe to venture into the heart of the town without a bodyguard.

But he took out his neat little notebook, which he had entitled "My Diary of Good Deeds," and under the date, July 15, made the following entry:

"Tried to stop a fellow this morning from going across Mrs. Watson's lawn."

### III

#### MR. BLAISDELL CHANGES HIS MIND

WHEN Michael Dorr brought the horse to a stand and had leisure to inspect the damage, his heart sank. The wagon did not appear to be seriously injured, except that one shaft was split; but nearly all the contents that had been entrusted to him for delivery were spoiled.

A small crowd quickly gathered; two men helped Michael to right the cart, and a couple of small boys gathered up such spilled articles as were worth collecting and brought them to him.

Depressed by a disaster that was sure to have serious consequences for him, Michael, although grateful to his helpers, was not very responsive to their questions.

"A kid that had got fresh with me hit the horse with a stone and started him up," he said; he did not volunteer any

## A CHANGE OF MIND

further explanation. "I guess Mr. Blaisdell will be pretty sore when he sees all this."

He was right; Mr. Blaisdell, the butcher, was indignant and disposed to be abusive. He had hired Michael as a delivery and errand boy only the day before, and to find that he had picked such an unworthy candidate irritated him, quite apart from any question of financial loss.

"Consider yourself fired," he said. His blue eyes snapped and his muscular hands grabbed at his apron angrily. "A nice mess you've made! You won't get a chance to make another."

"I don't think it was my fault," began Michael, but the butcher interrupted.

"I never yet knew a boy that did think anything was his fault. You're fired. Do you get me? And I don't care how soon you leave, either. There's fifty cents for your day's work."

"I don't want it," replied Michael. "You don't think I've earned it, and I won't take it."

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

He started to leave the shop, but the butcher called him back.

"I want to know how this happened," he said. "That old horse is always as steady as a rock. What did you do to him, anyhow?"

"I did n't do anything to him. I was delivering Mrs. Watson's order when a fellow — it was that Bartlett kid that lives up there on the hill — got fresh with me, so I chased him. Then I was getting up on the wagon-seat when he began throwing stones; he hit me with one and the horse with the other, and the first thing I knew the horse had bolted and upset the wagon."

"Yes. If you'd tended to business, as you were hired to do, and had let the other fellow alone, this would n't have happened. Was it Mrs. Theodore Bartlett's boy?"

"I don't know. He lives in a big, red-brick house up on top of the hill."

"Yes, that's the fellow." Mr. Blaisdell meditated a moment. "She's a good customer; still — Tom," — he turned to his assistant, — "I'm going out for an hour or

## A CHANGE OF MIND

so." He began to remove his apron; to Michael he said, "You'll come up to Mrs. Bartlett's with me."

It was a walk of about three quarters of a mile; Mr. Blaisdell was a silent man and did not speak at all until Michael pointed out the spot where the mishap had occurred.

"Hum!" said Mr. Blaisdell. "And what caused you and young Bartlett to have a scrap, anyway?"

"He told me not to cut across Mrs. Watson's lawn."

"Of course you should n't cut across anybody's lawn," said Mr. Blaisdell. "You see, if you'd behaved right in the first place, this never would have happened."

He resumed his severe expression of countenance. Michael made no further attempt at self-defense. If Mr. Blaisdell chose to regard that trivial and innocent act of trespass as the real cause of the catastrophe — well, Michael said to himself, he was glad he was not going to work for such a man any more.

They entered Mrs. Theodore Bartlett's



## THE HILLTOP TROOP

driveway. Michael straightened up. He would certainly not bear himself like a culprit in his enemy's house.

Mr. Blaisdell seemed to hesitate for a moment, but finally decided not to take the turn leading to the kitchen door. He advanced to the front steps and ascended them to the piazza, treading in a manner that denoted dignity and substance. Michael lagged a little behind, uneasy but defiant.

Mr. Blaisdell rang the bell and cleared his throat. To the maid who opened the door he said:

"Is Mrs. Bartlett in?"

The maid, who was a rather supercilious-looking person, anyway, surveyed Mr. Blaisdell and Michael with suspicion.

"What shall I say you want to see her about?"

"Particular business," replied Mr. Blaisdell. "Tell her it's Mr. Blaisdell, the butcher, and he has particular business."

"Wait, please."

Mr. Blaisdell cleared his throat again dur-

## A CHANGE OF MIND

ing the maid's absence and pawed the rug with one foot in a manner that denoted rising irritation. Nevertheless, when Mrs. Bartlett finally appeared, he was suave enough — more suave than she, for she stood inside the screen door and compelled him to talk through it. She was a slim, sharp-featured, self-satisfied-looking woman of more than middle age; she listened with no encouraging expression while Mr. Blaisdell spoke.

“I’ve come up here on kind of an unpleasant errand, Mrs. Bartlett,” he began. “This boy, Michael Dorr — I hired him yesterday to deliver for me, and he went out with the wagon on his first trip this morning. Pretty soon he came back and told me the horse had run away and upset the wagon; as I figure it, about thirty dollars’ worth of provisions was spoiled. When I come to question him, he tells me he got into some kind of an argument with your boy, which ended with your boy throwing stones at him and hitting the horse; that’s what started the runaway. I’m not saying

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

Michael was free from blame in the matter; but it seemed to me that when the case was brought to your attention you would feel disposed to make good, — well, say, half the loss, — say, fifteen dollars.”

Mrs. Bartlett did not answer immediately. She fixed her disapproving eyes on Michael’s face; then swept him with them slowly from head to foot. And then she turned her icily calm countenance upon Mr. Blaisdell.

“I think you have been imposed upon, Mr. Blaisdell,” she said. “Reginald would certainly never have thrown stones at any one except under the most extreme provocation. In fact, I do not for one moment believe that he threw any stones at all. The boy whom you hired no doubt made up the story in order to escape being blamed.”

“I didn’t make it up!” cried Michael. “It’s true.”

Mrs. Bartlett surveyed him again in silence. Then she turned away, walked to the foot of the stairs and called:

“Reginald! O Reginald!”

From above came the reply.

## A CHANGE OF MIND

"What is it you want?"

"Will you come down here a moment, dear?" Mrs. Bartlett's tone in addressing her son was appealing and gentle — very different from the tone that she had employed in answering Mr. Blaisdell.

"Tell me what you want me for." Reginald's voice was ungracious.

"It's quite important that you should come down, Reginald. There's some one here."

Whether it was curiosity or a tardy willingness to oblige that prompted him, Reggie came slowly down the stairs. He did not see who the visitors were until he advanced to the door; his mother shut them off from his view. When his eyes fell on Michael, he scowled and looked away at Mr. Blaisdell; in his glance there were both fear and defiance.

"Reginald, Mr. Blaisdell tells me that this boy accuses you of throwing stones at him. He says that one of the stones hit his horse and caused a runaway. I told Mr. Blaisdell I was perfectly sure you would never throw stones at anybody. Of course,

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

if you did do what Mr. Blaisdell and this boy say, it's a very serious matter."

Fear and defiance were stronger in Reggie than respect for the truth.

"I did n't," he said.

"You did n't!" Michael stepped close to the screen, and Reggie involuntarily drew back. "You mean to say that when I chased you off the walk you did n't pick up a couple of stones and throw them at me?"

"I certainly did not!" declared Reggie.

"Who did you throw them at, then?"

"I did n't throw any stones."

"You did n't hit me on the leg with one? You did n't hit the horse on the leg with another?"

"No."

Reggie looked his accuser squarely in the eyes.

"Well, say," exclaimed Michael after a moment, "if your mother was n't right there, I'd tell you what I think of you!"

"It makes no difference to me what you think," retorted Reggie.

"Don't bandy words with him, dear," in-



## A CHANGE OF MIND

terposed Reggie's mother. "You see, Mr. Blaisdell, it's just as I knew it must be. You've been imposed upon." She put her arm round Reggie's waist and patted him with her hand.

Mr. Blaisdell hesitated. "It's a mighty funny thing!" he grumbled. "Don't seem as if a boy would be likely to make up such a story."

Mrs. Bartlett turned with eyes flashing. "Kindly send me my bill as soon as possible, Mr. Blaisdell. I will have no further dealings with you."

She swept away from the door, drawing her son with her.

Mr. Blaisdell turned and strode down the steps. Michael followed.

"He's a liar!" exclaimed Michael.

"Hold your tongue!" Mr. Blaisdell commanded angrily. "If it had n't been for you, there'd have been no such mess. You've cost me thirty dollars in damage and the loss of one of my best customers. Pretty good for one day's work. I wonder if you can do as well in your next job."

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"You can blame me if you want to, but it was n't my fault," insisted Michael. "I've told you the whole truth about what started the runaway, and that fellow lied up and down, that 's all."

Mr. Blaisdell made no reply. Michael lagged behind him and determined to leave him at the next cross-street. Out of that, however, came Frank Bartlett and Jim Woods, Frank swinging a baseball bat, and as they passed they both nodded to Michael, Frank genially, Jim with an austerity that was owing to self-consciousness and shyness. Then after they had passed, Frank called, "Hi, there, Dorr!"

Michael turned and stopped.

"Want to come and knock up flies with us?" asked Frank.

"Thanks; I'd like to, but I can't," Michael answered.

He wished the next moment that he had accepted the invitation. He had declined it because his heart was too full of bitterness to make enjoyment of anything possible; yet the mere friendly invitation had, as he dis-

## A CHANGE OF MIND

covered, suddenly brightened his whole outlook. Just when it seemed that people either despised him or distrusted him, here was evidence that some one, anyway, felt kindly toward him.

At the crossing he turned from Mr. Blaisdell and started for home.

"Here, where you going?" asked Mr. Blaisdell. "Come back; I want to talk to you."

Reluctantly Michael obeyed, and for a little while Mr. Blaisdell walked on in silence.

"That was Dr. Bartlett's boy we passed a minute ago," he remarked, "and young Woods. You'd never catch their mothers acting so. Not much." He seemed to be speaking to himself, but the next moment he addressed Michael directly. "I've made up my mind you've told me the truth. Just the same, if you'd tended strictly to business instead of scrapping with that fellow, this trouble would n't have happened. Under the circumstances I'm willing to keep you on; I'll have to deduct two weeks' wages

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

as part payment for the loss you've caused me."

Michael did not feel it necessary to express any sentiments of gratitude. He merely said, "All right, Mr. Blaisdell."

"It will be some satisfaction when she sees you're still working for me," continued Mr. Blaisdell. "She'll know then that I took your word ahead of her son's. That will sting her quite a little." He added with further satisfaction after a moment: "There's no other place in town that can supply her with the fancy goods that I did. And she's the kind that's got to have fancy goods in order to live. I'll bet she'll be coming back to me inside of a month." He seemed to realize suddenly that he had been taking unduly into his confidence a boy who ought to be disciplined, and to feel that he had lost dignity by so doing; for immediately he said with asperity: "Now, Michael, let this be a lesson to you. Hereafter, if you want to work for me, you'll have to tend strictly to business."

Michael acquiesced in silence. An hour

## A CHANGE OF MIND

later he was again driving the cart and delivering the orders on the hill. He kept a sharp lookout for Reggie; when he stopped in front of Mrs. Watson's, he made a point of cutting across the lawn exactly as he had done before, and so satisfied some obscure impulse of pride, even while determining to keep to people's paths thereafter. But Reggie did not appear, and in view of Mr. Blaisdell's injunction to tend strictly to business, Michael felt that it was just as well.

When he got home that evening, his mother was putting the supper on the kitchen table, and Dick was practicing some variations on a mouth organ. His mother welcomed him with an affectionate smile; but Dick, sitting on a kitchen chair with his legs outstretched and his feet crossed, continued without intermission his musical efforts. He desisted, however, when in response to his mother's question "How did it go, Michael?" his brother answered, "Not so well as it might."

"What was the matter?" Mrs. Dorr looked anxious.



## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"I've been docked two weeks' pay. It's too bad, mother, when I thought I was going to be able to help you right away."

"But what did you do that you should have been punished so?"

"I suppose I'm lucky to be holding the job."

Michael narrated the incidents that had been so disastrous in their effects; Mrs. Dorr and Dick interrupted his story with exclamations of wrath and disgust.

"I would n't have believed people could behave so!" cried Mrs. Dorr when he had finished. "But at least it's to Mr. Blaisdell's credit that he felt it was you that was telling the truth."

"I hope you'll lay for that fellow, Mike, and give him a good licking," said Dick.

"Hush, Dick, hush! Of course Michael will do no such thing."

"He ought to. It's the only way to handle such a case."

Michael was of a more pacific disposition. "The time for licking a fellow is just when he gives you cause," he said. "I meant to

## A CHANGE OF MIND

lick him when he hit me with that rock, but the horse's running away sidetracked me. Now, the thing to do is to pay no more attention to him, unless he gets fresh with me again; and then of course I'll lick him on the spot."

"You're too easy-going!" grumbled Dick.

But his mother said, "No; Michael's just right, and you'll get on much better in the world, Dick, if you don't show such a quarrelsome nature."

Dick did not reply; his mouth was set in obstinate lines. He respected his brother extremely, but he always thought him a little slow and lacking in spirit. He knew that if he had Michael's size and muscle he would stir round a good deal more than Michael did; he would bang people's heads if they got nasty with him.

So Dick expressed it to himself, and the more he thought about Michael's misfortune and the injury that had been put upon him, the more did the grievance rankle in his mind. And that evening, while it rankled, a plan for vengeance took form. Young

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

Bartlett and his mother had tried to discredit Michael and deprive him of the job that was exceedingly important to him and his family; they had succeeded in having him unfairly burdened with what amounted to a fine. It was right that they should suffer in proportion to the injury they had inflicted.

So Dick reasoned; and it was not hard for him to devise a method of retaliation. He had already acquired an improper familiarity with the Bartlett premises; but his ravages among the raspberries had been prompted by a desire for adventure rather than by a more criminal impulse; and he had attempted no wanton or malicious depredations. Now, however, animated by a chivalrous desire to avenge his brother, he planned a more desperate raid, and never dwelt upon the felonious nature of the deed.

That night he lay quiet but awake in his bed until assured that his brother, who occupied the room with him, was asleep. Then he rose, dressed quietly in the dark, and left the house.

## IV

### MYSTERIOUS DEVASTATION

**F**RANK, his mother and sister were still seated at the breakfast table that Dr. Bartlett had left only a few moments before, when Reggie and his mother entered the room with every evidence of anger and excitement. Mrs. Theodore Bartlett's face was red, and she was breathing hard. Reggie's expression was that of disgust and sullen wrath.

"I wish," cried his mother, standing in the doorway, "I wish you people would come right over and look at my place! It's been ruined in the night — positively ruined! The most abominable outrage! Vandals — vandals!"

"Why, what on earth!" asked her sister-in-law. "What has happened, Nellie?"

"I can't tell you what has happened, I can't speak about it, I can't speak about it! Just come and see for yourselves."

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"I know who did it, too!" said Reggie in a malevolent voice. "I'll have him put in jail for it."

Dr. Bartlett's family rose from the table and hastened across the street with their indignant relatives.

Mrs. Theodore Bartlett's house looked much the same as usual, and so did the lawn in front of it. At the side, however, behind the hedge that enclosed what had been a pretty flower garden, ruin met the eye. Plants had been indiscriminately torn up by the roots and trampled upon; there was not a bed of flowers that had not been utterly ravaged. Two large earthenware jars that had held two shapely little bay trees had been overthrown, the trees stamped upon, and their symmetry broken. A garden seat had been rammed into the barberry hedge with such force that a gap had been opened up.

The sister-in-law of the sufferer expressed her indignation; Elizabeth and Frank were more vehement than their mother.

"This is n't all," said the afflicted lady. "Not even the worst."



## MYSTERIOUS DEVASTATION

She led the way to what had been the extensive vegetable garden at the back of the house. Where a day before had been thriving rows of peas and beans and corn, now all was a mess of prostrate and withered plants. Similar destruction had visited the potato patch, and the asparagus bed that had for years been a prized possession exhibited now, instead of a mass of bushes with delicate, waving plumage, a heap of tangled and faded greenery in one corner of the bare plot from which it had been uprooted.

"Scarcely a thing left!" said Mrs. Theodore Bartlett. "It's as if an army had passed over it. And we had the best things to eat, always. We never had to buy any garden stuff from June to October. I can never enjoy other vegetables the way I do my own."

"But who could have done all this?" asked her sister-in-law.

"Oh, I know who did it, all right!" struck in Reggie again in his malevolent voice. "And if you had backed me up at the Scout meeting, Frank, it never would have hap-

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

pened." He turned a reproving look upon his cousin.

"Backed you up how?"

"When I wanted the troop to keep watch on our place at night, you turned that idea down; but I was sure that unless it was watched something like this would happen. Some one's been stealing our raspberries right along; I told you that. This is just the next step."

Reggie spoke in a voice that seemed to mingle reproach, wrath, and also some measure of satisfaction at having his gloomy forebodings vindicated.

"Probably the next thing will be to burn the house down."

"But why should any one have done such wanton damage?" asked Mrs. George Bartlett.

"For spite," replied her sister-in-law. "Spite. Nothing but spite. That's all."

"Who did it, do you suppose?"

"We *know* who did it," asserted Reggie. "It was a mucker from down in the Hollow, of course. A fellow named Dorr — Mike Dorr."

## MYSTERIOUS DEVASTATION

"What makes you think so?" Frank's tone was rather challenging.

"Why would n't we think so?" Reggie's mother took up the answer and turned a severe glance upon her nephew. "After the way that boy behaved yesterday, I'd believe anything of him. He ought to be in jail — and he will be, if I can put him there."

"What did he do, Aunt Nellie?"

"He showed himself to be a lying young ruffian. In the first place, just because Reggie asked him politely not to walk on Mrs. Watson's lawn, — he was delivering for Blaisdell, the butcher, — he rushed at Reggie to knock him off the sidewalk. Fortunately, just at that time something started up Blaisdell's horse; otherwise, I don't know what he might have done to Reggie. The horse upset the wagon, and everything inside was spilled out; and then apparently this Dorr boy, in trying to explain away his carelessness to Blaisdell, threw all the blame on Reggie — said he'd thrown stones at him and the horse, which, of course, he had n't done — had you, Reggie?"

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"No, of course not," said Reggie in a voice that was perhaps needlessly loud and defiant.

"So then what does Blaisdell do but bring that young ruffian up to my house; and the ruffian had the effrontery to charge Reggie with this, and Blaisdell called on me to pay the damages! Imagine! I called Reggie at once and got the truth of the story; and even then, if you'll believe it, Blaisdell seemed unconvinced. I was so indignant that I told him I would have no further dealings with him. He went away, I imagine, feeling pretty disgusted, for, after all, what was his loss from having his wagon upset compared with the loss of a good customer? I must say, though, that now I don't know what I shall do. Morris never has such good things as Blaisdell; and with no garden vegetables to depend on—I don't know! It is n't as if either Reggie or I had voracious appetites and were capable of devouring all sorts of coarse food."

Elizabeth and her mother exchanged amused, surreptitious glances, but Frank was not amused.

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"You think, then, that Mike Dorr came up here and did all this out of spite?" he asked.

"I have n't a doubt of it. Reggie has n't, either. Reggie said at once that he knew that was just what had happened."

"I don't believe that's what happened at all, Aunt Nellie." Frank spoke with earnestness. "I know him a little, and I'm sure he's not that sort of fellow."

"I believe anything of a boy who would lie about Reggie as he did," retorted Reggie's mother. She looked sharply at Frank, and seemed not well pleased with his expression, for she said, "I wish you to understand, Frank, that I permit no one ever to doubt Reggie's word."

Her sister-in-law made haste to turn the conversation out of its threatening channel.

"But, anyway, Nellie, what would be the boy's motive in doing such a thing? Just a quarrel with Reggie — that hardly seems reason enough."

"Oh, no doubt he lost his job with Blaisdell. Of course, however insolent Blaisdell



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may have been with me, he naturally could n't tolerate a boy who had shown himself to be utterly untrustworthy. And I am perfectly certain Dorr did all this to revenge himself upon us because he felt we were responsible for his losing his job."

"Still," observed her sister-in-law, "if you have nothing but your suspicions —"

"Oh, I shall get evidence!" Mrs. Theodore Bartlett nodded her head severely. "It's hardly possible that he should be able to conceal his guilt."

"Indeed, whoever did this ought to be punished," agreed Mrs. George Bartlett. "At the same time, it seems as if it could hardly have been the work of a fully responsible person."

"Oh, I assure you, if you'd ever talked with him, you'd know he was responsible enough. And, Frank, I'm sure of one thing: you could n't put your Boy Scouts to a better use than to have them running down evidence against that fellow. Boys have ways of finding out things about one another."

Frank made a rather inarticulate reply to

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the effect that of course the Scouts would be glad if they might be of any service in tracking down the malefactor. Still, he thought it hardly probable.

But his aunt was no longer listening to him. She was too much concerned with the various aspects of the disaster to receive extraneous impressions.

“To have all my nice vegetables destroyed!” she lamented. “We were having the most wonderful corn and peas and beans. And the potatoes were doing splendidly. Of course, some of those may be saved, but it won’t be anything like a full crop. I don’t know what Reggie and I are to do. Morris’s meats are bad enough, but his vegetables are always poor. After breaking off with Blaisdell, I thought we could manage, with the aid of our garden, but with that gone — I’m not sure that it would n’t be wiser to keep right on with Blaisdell, after all — just as if nothing had happened. As a matter of fact, of course he’s discharged that boy, so really there’s no reason why I should n’t patronize him. I dare say what

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I thought was his impudence was not intentional."

"I never found Blaisdell impudent or disagreeable to deal with," said Mrs. George Bartlett. "I certainly don't believe in suffering for the sake of pride. If you feel that you and Reggie are going to be made miserable through getting your provisions from Morris, I think you'll be very foolish to drop Blaisdell."

"You are probably right," assented her sister-in-law. "Especially as Reggie is troubled with a weak digestion; I feel it's always necessary that he should have the best. But really, Adelaide, is n't it disgusting, is n't it disheartening, to have one's place ruined so, all in a night?"

Frank, who had been wandering along the edge of the garden, stood for a moment with one foot poised in air, as if measuring a spot on the ground below it. He returned, and said to his aunt:

"There are plenty of tracks; it will be easy enough to find out whether Mike Dorr's shoes fit them or not."

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"Where?" exclaimed Mrs. Bartlett; and both she and Reggie hastened to examine the footprints that Frank pointed out.

"I know they're too small to be Dorr's," Frank said. "He's as big as I am, and you can see that they're a good inch shorter than my shoe. They're all the same size, too; it's only one fellow that did all this."

But both Mrs. Bartlett and Reggie were unwilling to relinquish their conviction of Michael Dorr's guilt.

"I don't know anything about the size of his feet, but I'm sure he did it!" declared Reggie.

"Who else is there that would have done it?" demanded Reggie's mother.

"It is n't as if the fellow came in just to steal things," Reggie pointed out. "He came in just to do damage. Nobody else would have had a grudge against us."

"Still," said Frank, "if he could n't get into the shoes that made those marks —"

"Oh, it would be just like him to make some small kid come up and tramp round in the dirt just to throw people off the track,"

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replied Reggie. "That's just the kind of mean thing he'd do — try to get somebody else into trouble."

Reggie's expression of virtuous contempt for a fellow who would do that made his cousin somehow want to kick him.

Afterwards Frank said to Elizabeth, "You know, I don't believe Reggie told the truth about that scrap."

"Reggie sometimes likes to believe that things were not just as he remembers them," said Elizabeth mildly. "But if it was n't that Dorr boy, who do you suppose would have done it? What object would any one else have had?"

Frank shrugged his shoulders. Nevertheless, an idea had occurred to him. It might very well have been Mike Dorr's younger brother. He was a "fresh kid" and a pugnacious one — just the kind that would feel it devolved on him in an emergency to vindicate the family honor.

"It probably was some one from the Hollow," he said. "Of course, there's a pretty tough gang down there. But Reggie



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ought to have a nurse. Letting him go round loose — he's sure to stir up trouble."

Frank would have been more sympathetic with his relatives in their misfortune had they not always thought and talked so much about food. That they should be deprived of some of the delicacies that were often the tedious subject of their conversation did not seem to him altogether deplorable.

Meanwhile, his aunt had telephoned to the police; within half an hour she was conducting an officer of the law over her outraged premises. She acquainted him with her suspicions and the reason for them. He did not commit himself to any expression of opinion; but he took measurements of the footprints, and assured Mrs. Bartlett that he would lose no time in starting an investigation.

In accordance with this promise, within the next hour he walked into Mr. Blaisdell's store and said, "Morning, Mr. Blaisdell! Can you tell me where I might find a boy named Mike Dorr, that I understand was lately in your employ?"

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"Right here; I'm still employing him," Blaisdell replied. "He's out back of the shop." The proprietor went to the rear door and called, and presently Michael appeared.

"There was considerable damage done up to Mrs. Theodore Bartlett's place last night," said the policeman, looking at Michael severely. "Garden all tore to pieces — malicious mischief, if ever I saw a case of it. The young rascal forgot himself, though, and left his tracks in the soil. Dorr, let me take a measurement of your shoe."

Michael grew red, but said nothing. He leaned against the wall and raised one foot, while the policeman, with ruler in hand, bent to measure it.

"What's all that?" Blaisdell asked. "How's this boy connected with the damage?"

"Oh, I'm not saying he is," replied the officer. "But when the injured party expresses a suspicion, you've got to look into it, that's all. Eleven inches; well, say, that's one too many. Had some youngster

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up there with you, boy, to help you with the job?"

The policeman's tone had become abruptly, sharply inquisitorial.

"I don't know anything about it," replied Michael indignantly. "I have n't been near Mrs. Bartlett's house since I was up there with Mr. Blaisdell yesterday afternoon. And he'll tell you that I came away with him."

"Yes, that's right," said Mr. Blaisdell. "I guess, officer, you're barking up the wrong tree this time."

The policeman dropped his intimidating expression at once; his brow cleared.

"I dare say," he admitted. "I felt obliged to follow out the lady's clue, that's all. The size of your foot saves you," he said jocosely to Michael.

After the policeman had gone, Mr. Blaisdell looked at the boy and said:

"Honestly, Mike, do you know anything about this affair up at Mrs. Bartlett's place?"

"No," Michael answered. "Not a thing. I had n't even heard of it."

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"I believe you," said Mr. Blaisdell. "I believe you were telling me the truth yesterday, too. And I think that those Bartletts are mean enough to go on hounding folks that they're down on. You just be careful, and don't give them any just cause to make trouble for you."

The telephone rang; Mr. Blaisdell crossed the room to answer it.

"Hello! Yes. Mrs. Theodore Bartlett?"

Michael looked at him; Mr. Blaisdell's face was expressive of amazement and also of wariness.

"Yes. I heard of the outrage, Mrs. Bartlett. Oh, no, I'm sure he would n't have done it!"

Then there was a period during which Michael saw his employer making wry faces into the telephone. And then suddenly and amazingly Mr. Blaisdell's countenance beamed, and he spoke in the most mellifluous voice.

"Oh, yes, we have some delicious corn today, Mrs. Bartlett. Yes, the string beans are very fine. I can't altogether recommend

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the cantaloupes — a little green, I'm sorry to say. In the way of meat? How about a very nice set of sweetbreads? Or a chicken? Both? Very well, Mrs. Bartlett; I'll send them right along."

He hung up the receiver and turned to Michael with a smile both amused and triumphant. \*

"She's climbed down off her high horse pretty quick," he said. "Willing to go on dealing with me, after all. She had to kind of apologize for it by saying her vegetable garden had been ruined, and she didn't know where else to turn to get vegetables fit to eat." He chuckled. "She's made up her mind you're the guilty party; when I started in to say a good word for you, she shut me right up." He chuckled again. "I don't know as it will be a pleasure for you, Michael, but it looks to me as if you'd have to deliver the goods Mrs. Bartlett has ordered. If you should happen to see her, I expect she'll have a fit."

He laughed loudly, in high spirits now.

"When she finds I'm still delivering for



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you, she'll probably stop all dealings with you again," suggested Michael.

"Not much she won't. She can't get fancy goods from anyone else in town, and it's fancy goods that she's got to have. She would n't be coming to me now if she had n't found it was a matter of necessity for her." Mr. Blaisdell chuckled again. "Mrs. Bartlett's necessities are most people's luxuries."

Michael did not relish the task assigned to him, but he determined, whatever happened, to preserve dignity and self-control. He hoped that he might not see either Mrs. Bartlett or her son, although he realized that if she was to be one of Mr. Blaisdell's customers a meeting with her could not be long delayed.

His heart sank when driving up the Bartletts' avenue he saw mother and son seated on the piazza. He had to pass before them. He sat straight on the driver's seat, looking neither to right nor left, when his ears were assailed by Reggie's loud exclamation:

"Well, mother, what do you know about that!"

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The next moment Mrs. Bartlett's voice was raised in sharp command:

"Boy! Stop!"

Michael stopped at once and looked round. Mrs. Bartlett had risen from her chair and stood at the railing of the piazza, with an expression of formidable severity upon her face. Reggie lolled in a rocking-chair in the background.

"Boy," said Mrs. Bartlett, "does Mr. Blaisdell still keep you in his employ?"

"Yes, ma'am." Michael's tone was respectful but decisive.

"I am astonished, simply astonished. If I had supposed that for one moment, I should not have relented toward him. You may tell him so. He really had the effrontery to send you up here?"

"He sent me up here," said Michael.

"But he knew that you are under suspicion of having raided and destroyed my garden. I told him —"

"The policeman you sent after me found there was no reason for the suspicion. And Mr. Blaisdell knows it."

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Reggie made a contribution from the rocking-chair.

"I'm going to keep watch," he said in a threatening voice, "and if ever I catch you stealing an apple or anything else off our place, I'm going to make it hot for you!"

"Don't worry. I'd choke if I tried to eat an apple or anything else off this place," retorted Michael.

"Leave the things at the kitchen door and then kindly leave the grounds as soon as possible," commanded Mrs. Bartlett majestically.

Michael was very willing to comply with her wishes. He repeated the conversation to his employer.

"As long as she did n't make you take the order back, it's all right," Mr. Blaisdell said. "She'll put up a great show of pride and all that, but she's got to have her fancy goods just the same."

That evening when Michael was going home to his supper, he met Frank Bartlett, and to his surprise Frank turned and walked with him.

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"There's something I wanted to ask you," said Frank. "We've started a troop of Boy Scouts up in our neighborhood, and some of us were wondering if you and a bunch of your friends would n't like to come in on it."

Michael hesitated. He was pleased, but the treatment he had undergone in the last two days had left him sensitive and suspicious.

"I guess you have n't talked it over with the other fellows, have you?" he said.

"I've spoken of it to Jim Woods, the fellow I was playing tennis with that day. And Mr. Winton, our Scout Master, is all for it."

"It's pretty good of you to want me; I don't know just why you do; but I'd like to ask you one thing. Does that cousin of yours belong?"

"Reggie? Yes."

"That lets me out, then," said Michael. "I would n't go into anything that he's in."

"I understood that you and he had some trouble," observed Frank vaguely.

"Yes, we did. I could n't join anything that he's in."

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"He might get out if you joined," suggested Frank.

"I would n't join till he got out. Say, I know that's a pretty rough way for me to talk when you've been wanting to do a nice thing by me; but I can't help it. Thanks just the same."

Frank walked with him in silence to the next corner, where they parted. But just at leaving, he said: "If you ever feel that you want to change your mind, let me know. Jim Woods and Mr. Winton and I thought you and your brother and some of your friends would be a great addition to the troop."

"I did n't know Dick made such a hit with your friend Woods as all that," said Michael.

"He did n't; but Jim can see the value of having such a quick-tongued kid for a friend instead of an enemy."

Michael laughed. "It's pretty decent of Woods to be so good-natured. I'll tell Dick; it ought to make him ashamed of himself."

"More likely it will make him more struck



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on himself," remarked Frank; and Michael laughed again.

At home Michael did not immediately transmit the message to his brother. Dick was too eager to talk. He seemed to be brimming over with excitement. Had Mike heard what had happened up at the Bartletts' house? Was n't it great that it had happened to just those people? It certainly seemed as if sometimes people got what was coming to them. He talked so excitedly about it, there was such a glitter of mischief and knowledge in his eyes, that suddenly suspicion seized upon Michael. He searched his memory of the preceding night; and now it came upon him that as in a doze he had been aware of his brother's crossing the room and closing the door. When he had waked in the morning, Dick was sound asleep in bed; but now, for the first time, Michael realized that Dick had not been in bed all night.

"Whoever did that damage up at Mrs. Bartlett's had better keep mighty quiet about it." Michael looked gravely across the sup-

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per table at his brother. Dick lowered his eyes and became intent upon his food. "They suspected me, because they thought I would be trying to get even with them for the way they treated me. A policeman stopped at the store, all ready to arrest me, but he let me off after he measured my foot. The fellow that did the job left a lot of foot-prints in the dirt up there; so they're looking for a fellow with shoes that fit the prints."

"They suspected you, and sent a policeman after you!" exclaimed his mother indignantly. "Then I hope they never find out who did it. Such people!"

"It would be a pretty serious matter if they caught the fellow. I guess he could be put in jail. Whoever it was, he'd better not go bragging about it among his friends."

"I should n't think any one who would do such a thing would brag about it," said Mrs. Dorr. "It was a mean enough act — even if I can't feel very sorry for the people it was done to."

Michael said nothing further, but as he glanced at Dick he was certain that his

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brother was guilty. The thought weighed upon him for various reasons. In the first place, of course, he feared that the police would be able to work a case up against Dick and convict him. But even if they did not, there was a moral problem that Michael at the moment felt unable to deal with. If Dick were guilty and his mother became aware of it, she would insist on compensating Mrs. Bartlett for the damage. And she simply could not afford to take on another burden. Michael knew that he would feel an obligation to help her in thus making restitution; and he was resentful enough not to wish to make any sacrifice for the Bartletts' benefit. The best course seemed to be not to have any responsibility in the matter, not to know really whether Dick had been the marauder or not, but simply to put him on his guard. It was not a solution under which Michael's conscience rested particularly easy, but it was the one that his common sense commended to him at the moment.

So he was rather glad after supper that

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Dick did not seek his confidence, did not come to him with a confession. And he did not tell Dick of the invitation he had received and declined. He decided it would be wise to keep Dick in ignorance of an opportunity that it had been necessary to reject.

Afterwards he regretted his silence.

## V

### REGGIE PLANS AN ATTACK IN FORCE

AS a Scout, Reggie soon showed himself to be most unpromising. He neither knew nor cared to know anything about the wild life of the woods. He was lazy in the use both of his mind and his hands. His vanity was pleased by his appearance in the khaki uniform; the semi-military effect gave him as much of a thrill as he was capable of experiencing; but as a practical working member of the troop he was of negligible value.

Some of the fellows wondered why he continued in an organization in which he apparently had so little interest. The truth was, he was as lonely as he was lazy, and in that respect was like most other lazy people. He wanted companionship, yet he was not willing to take the active part in a common work that alone makes real companionship pos-



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sible. He was willing to trudge round with the other boys, and he liked to wear the uniform, and so imagine himself on the same footing with the others; but he did not know and apparently could not be taught that the only cure for his mental and social isolation could come from coöperating heartily with the others. They all showed clearly enough that they preferred working with anyone else in the troop, and on the "hikes" there was always a good deal of manœuvring, which had for its object in each instance the getting rid of Reggie.

An episode that increased his unpopularity occurred on the first "hike." The boys were all proud in their new khaki uniforms — the first time that as a troop they had worn them. Reggie had perhaps been proudest of all, and during the progress through the streets of the town he had kept himself well to the front and on one side of the line, so that the people standing on the sidewalks and looking out of the windows should be sure to see him; but when the troop got out into the country, and there were no more

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spectators along the way, the fatigue of walking began to tell on Reggie; soon he lagged behind. He was a rear guard of one, six or eight feet in the rear of the others, when they passed Dick Dorr and two of his friends from the Hollow, who had been out berrying and were bringing home pails of blueberries. Dick surveyed the uniformed troop with his customary smile of derision, and when all but Reggie had passed, he said in a loud voice:

“Say, fellows, get on to the Boy Scouts!”

The witticism found a ready and immediate echo. “O gee, look at the Boy Scouts!” And shouts of laughter arose from the originator and his imitators.

The members of the troop muttered to one another indignantly and some of them looked round. Muckers and lobsters and “chumps” were some of the epithets with which they characterized the insolent commentators. Mr. Winton spoke up briskly:

“Never mind, boys; pay no attention to that sort of thing. Walk right on.”

But Reggie, after going a little distance,

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caught up a stone and, glancing first at Mr. Winton and then backward at the three and seeing that he was observed by neither his superior officers nor by the enemy, let fly his missile. Two or three members of the troop looked round in time to catch him in the act and to see the stone strike the fence close by the boy who had made the disparaging remark. The sharp clang caused others to turn; and instantly there were angry outcries from the assaulted party, and an almost immediate resort to the weapon that Reggie had employed. The shots went wide or were easily dodged. Mr. Winton raised his voice.

“No stone-throwing!” he commanded. “Any boy who throws a stone will be sent home at once. Walk right along, now.”

As soon as they were all out of range, he had them stop.

“Now,” he said, “one of you fellows showed just the spirit that a Scout should never show. A boy who throws stones is a poor sort of boy, and it was one of you fellows that threw the first stone. I don’t know which one; I may have suspicions. It may

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be that if the fellow who did it owns up he will relieve some one who is innocent from being the victim of suspicion. Is any one going to speak?"

He received no response. Ted Harris and Jack Bradford looked at Reggie; but Reggie glanced about from one to another as if seeking to detect the culprit.

Of course Jack and Ted did not keep their knowledge to themselves; it traveled rapidly enough through the troop. Jim Woods dropped back and walked with Reggie.

"Look here," he said, "why did n't you own up when Mr. Winton asked who threw that stone?"

"Did n't want to," replied Reggie sullenly. He resented the fact that any boy was in a position of authority over him, and he meant to show Jim Woods that he had a spirit of independence.

"It's a low-down thing to leave Mr. Winton thinking somebody else did it," said Jim.

"Don't worry so much about it," said Reggie. "I'm not worrying; you need n't."

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"Well, you'd better!" Jim snapped out, and, thoroughly angry, he left Reggie to walk by himself.

After half an hour of loneliness, during which it became apparent enough to Reggie that he was suffering social ostracism, he decided there was only one thing to do. He made his way forward to Mr. Winton's side and said, so that one or two of the fellows near by could hear:

"Mr. Winton, I want to tell you I was the one that threw that stone."

"I had an idea you were," said the Scout Master. "But I feel better about you, now that you've told me."

"I feel better myself," said Reggie in an earnest and audible voice. "I decided I did n't want anybody else to be blamed for it."

There was something unconvincing about the piety of the utterances. Mr. Winton glanced sharply at him; but Reggie's face was not so sanctimonious in expression as to compel disbelief in his sincerity.

"I'm particularly sorry it happened," said



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Mr. Winton, "because I hope before long to enlarge the troop with one or two patrols from the Hollow. Anything that breeds ill-feeling between you fellows and the boys down there is to be avoided."

Frank Bartlett, overhearing the Scout Master's remark, wondered what he ought to do. He had held back from acquainting Mr. Winton with the results of the interview that he had had with Mike Dorr; he was unwilling to make a report that must inevitably be to his cousin's disadvantage; but sooner or later Mr. Winton must know that the plan to interest the boys of the Hollow under the leadership of Mike Dorr had failed. Frank decided to speak up.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Winton," he said, "that we shan't be able to get much of a crowd from the Hollow, after all. I tried to get that fellow Dorr to join us and work up a patrol, but he would n't."

"Why not?"

"Oh, some personal matter. There's a fellow in the troop he does n't like, and so he won't come in with us. He said if it

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were n't for that he'd be glad to join and bring his gang with him."

"It seems as if a prejudice of that sort might be overcome; it should n't be allowed to stand in the way."

"Those fellows that called us Boy Scouts; I would n't be very crazy about having them come into the troop," remarked Jim Woods.

"You must make allowances for jealousy. People sometimes disparage the things they'd most like to have; it's one way of consoling one's self."

"Yes, but I've had experience with one of those fellows before," said Jim. "He's a fresh kid, and he's no good. None of his gang are any good, I'll bet."

Mr. Winton was silent. It did not seem the most propitious moment for taking the troop into his confidence and explaining the ultimate purpose that had been in his mind. The epithet "Scut" rankled; he would have to wait until it had been forgotten.

"I'm going to show you fellows a bit of land that belongs to me up on Hartley Hill," he said. "And if you approve of the idea,

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I would suggest that we build a log cabin there — just to have a place that we can call our own and that we can use as a sort of clubhouse when we're out tramping."

The idea appealed to the troop strongly. Still more enthusiastic were they when they beheld the proposed site. It was on the edge of a pine forest; looking off from the brow of the hill, it commanded a view of the home village two miles away, of the narrow, winding river and of the farms along its shores.

"This wood-lot back here belongs to me," said Mr. Winton, "so it won't be hard to get timber for a cabin. I'll draw plans and appoint a supervising architect, so that the work can go on during the week, if any of you want to work on it at times when I can't be helping. George, you're the carpenter of this troop, I guess, and I'll put you in charge of the building."

George Newcomb, a quiet, stocky, plain-looking boy, with a snub nose and ears that stood out from his head, looked pleased and proud. Honors did not often come his way;

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he was clumsy in sports and slow at his studies; but he had a workshop where he turned out toy boats, boxes, and a variety of little manufactures that showed an uncommon knack with tools.

"Remember, George, you're not to build the whole thing yourself," Mr. Winton warned him, with a smile. "You're to boss the job, not do it all with your own hands. And," he added, looking round at the rest with a mock sternness, "you other fellows are to keep watch on George and see that he makes you work."

They all laughed; afterwards Frank Bartlett said to Jim Woods:

"Have you noticed what a way Mr. Winton has of picking a fellow out and giving him a job he can do and making him feel important? George Newcomb will be keener than ever now."

"George can do the job all right," replied Jim. "But I'd like to see the job that one member of our troop could handle."

"You mean Reggie?"

"Yes. Honestly, he's the most useless kid

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that ever happened. He's worse than useless, for he's a nuisance. I wish there were some way of getting him to resign."

"That's a poor way to talk about a member of your patrol," said Frank, with solemnity; he enjoyed teasing his irritable friend. "You ought to be giving time and thought to making him useful instead of wishing he'd resign."

"That comes well from you!" grumbled Jim. "If you'd had any ordinary, decent family feeling, you'd have insisted on taking your relative under your wing instead of shoving him off on me."

So they continued to wrangle, half seriously, half jocularly, while the subject of their conversation trudged on in his usual mood of self-satisfaction. From time to time he produced a large cake of sweet chocolate from the pocket of his blouse, broke pieces off it and ate them, then returned the cake to his pocket. He did not offer it to any one else, although the two or three fellows who were near him glanced at it with hungry, appreciative eyes.



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That evening before going to bed, Reggie took out his "Diary of Good Deeds." He was methodical and conscientious in keeping his record; now he sat and pondered for some minutes before he decided what to write. He then took his pen and made the following entry:

"On the hike saved another fellow from being suspected of throwing stones."

Dick Dorr kept no diary of his good deeds; on the contrary, he was accustomed to count that day lost on which he failed to harass in some way or other some member of the colony that he had come to look upon as his generic enemies — the people on the Hill. Vegetable gardens and fruit orchards offered him the most obvious opportunity and one that he seldom neglected; but he prized even more the occasions when he had what he termed a "run-in with a Scut." He was not afraid of encounters with fellows bigger than himself, but he took care to keep them verbal rather than physical, and launched his attacks from some point of security or in the presence of a sufficient company of sup-

## REGGIE PLANS AN ATTACK

porters. Especially did he welcome encounters with Reggie Bartlett. Often he would hang about in the neighborhood of the Bartletts' house for the mere pleasure of calling out to Reggie when he ventured forth, "Hello, Boy Scut!" And this was his never-failing greeting when by some happy chance they met upon the street. Reggie, physically timorous, showed resentment only by elevating his head and walking on with what he conceived to be an air of unruffled dignity.

Nevertheless, the persecution galled him, and he turned over in his mind measures for putting a stop to it. He realized that in the troop there were few to whom he could look with any hope of securing coöperation in an effort to suppress the evil. Yet as he meditated, it occurred to him that Freddy Gilbert and Bill Whidden might, if tactfully handled, be prevailed upon to help.

Of all the fellows on the Hill they were the most susceptible to influences of bribery and corruption. Of course Reggie did not phrase their weakness in this crude way, even to

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himself; he merely decided that the time had come when he might find Freddy and Bill useful if he laid himself out to give them pleasure. So he obtained permission and money from his mother — never a difficult thing for him to do — and telephoned to Freddy and Bill that he would be glad to take them in to the city to luncheon and to the “movies.” Freddy and Bill, although they shared the prevailing sentiment about Reggie, accepted the invitation with alacrity.

Reggie drove them the ten miles to the city in his car; they sat in the back seat and held whispered conversations about their host and giggled, and from time to time called out teasing or derisive comments. By so doing they felt they were rehabilitating themselves in their own and in each other's esteem and were atoning for their weakness in accepting Reggie's hospitality. As for Reggie, he took their behavior as inspired by high spirits and good humor, owing to the entertainment that he was providing; and although he could have wished that these qualities had been manifested in some other way, his character-

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istic self-complacency saved him from annoyance.

In the city he put up his car at a garage and escorted his friends to the most expensive restaurant. He ordered for them and for himself the delicacies of the season, together with viands of a heartiness to appeal to a boy's nature; and for an hour and more the three sat and gorged themselves and engaged in no other conversation than that in praise of their food; but at last, when Reggie felt that the gratitude of his guests had sufficiently warmed their hearts toward him, he brought up the subject in the interest of which he was making such an extensive financial sacrifice.

"There's one thing that we fellows in the Scouts ought to put a stop to," he said, "and that is being insulted by those muckers down in the Hollow. You know what they call us, don't you? 'Scuts,' Boy 'Scuts'?"

"I'd smash anybody that called me that," said Bill, lolling back comfortably.

"There's one fellow that does it more than the rest, and if we gave him a good licking, I

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guess they'd all stop doing it," said Reggie. "He goes round yelling it at you wherever he sees you; he's the fellow that made it up; but he ducks and runs, and nobody's ever soaked him the way he ought to be soaked."

"Did you ever try to soak him, Reggie?" asked Freddy, and winked at Bill. Reggie saw the wink.

"No," he admitted. "He's heavier than I am, and I know he'd probably lick me. What's the use in fighting a fellow if it's not going to stop his calling you names? What he needs is to get a lesson from the bunch. He insults the bunch when he calls us Boy 'Scuts,' and it's the bunch that ought to punish him — not just some one fellow."

"Well, how is the bunch to do it?" asked Bill.

"I don't know that the whole bunch can, but I guess we three could manage things so he'd never say 'Scut' above a whisper as long as he lives. It ought to be done, for it is n't right a fellow should be allowed to go on insulting the organization. It's more than just a personal matter."



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"There's something in that," said Bill.

"What I was thinking is that we three could handle him," explained Reggie. "We don't need to beat him up or anything like that, but if we were just to rub his nose in the dirt, I guess he would n't be fresh with us again."

"It might be a good thing to do," agreed Freddy.

Bill suggested that they might never catch the fellow at just the right time.

"We can lay for him," said Reggie. "He always comes up past my place at about half past five every day, and if he happens to see me out he always yells at me. You fellows could be hiding behind the hedge, and we could all jump on him."

"Does he have a gang with him?" asked Bill.

"No, he comes up alone usually. You fellows might stop a few minutes after we get home and see if anything happens."

Reggie summoned the waiter, gave him a five-dollar bill, and told him to keep the change. His manner was princely; Bill and

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Freddy, whose parents never gave them sums of money to lavish upon similar entertainments, were impressed by it. They would not have admitted it to each other, but they were curious to know just how much of a tip the waiter ought to have; and they wished they had had a glimpse of the bill, so that they might have figured out the amount of the gratuity. Reggie's air of confidence and the waiter's air of respectful appreciation convinced them that their host had a knowledge of the finer points of life which they deplorably lacked.

The picture show to which Reggie took them exhibited one of the most popular of all "movie" actors — one whom Bill and Freddy had never before been fortunate enough to see. He appealed to their sense of humor inexpressibly; they fell against each other in their paroxysms of laughter, slapped each other's knees, and rocked and swayed, shrieking and groaning as if in pain. Reggie was less demonstrative in his mirth; he had seen the popular fun maker many times, and at the end of the performance

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expressed the opinion that although it was a good film, it had not given the star as much of a chance as some others.

Driving back from the city, Bill and Freddy sat in the rear seat of the automobile; but they did not hold whispered conversations about their host, did not giggle or call out derisive comments. For the time being, at least, they were subdued by the revelation of his greater authority and experience. When, shortly after five o'clock, they arrived at Reggie's house, they accepted not merely gratefully, but even submissively, their host's invitation to come in and have some ginger ale.

The dining-room window commanded a view of the road. Presently Reggie announced:

"There comes the slob that calls us 'Scuts.'"

Bill and Freddy peered out of the window, and Bill exclaimed, "Sure, and he's looking for you, Reggie!"

"I'll go out and walk down to the gate," Reggie said. "Then if you see me put my

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hand up to my head like this, you'll know he's called me a 'Scut,' and you sneak out the side door and along back of those trees and sneak up on him."

Reggie issued from the front door and strolled down toward the gate. Dick Dorr crossed the street, and came toward him, his eyes sparkling with a hostile light. Then in a moment Reggie's ears were gladdened with the insult for which they were listening:

"Hello, Boy Scut!"

Reggie raised his hand to his head and advanced slowly. Dick Dorr stood in the gateway and taunted him.

"Answer when you're spoken to, Boy Scut. If you come out of your yard, I'll bump you off the sidewalk, Boy Scut. I'm watchin' you, Boy Scut. You pick up a rock and I'll come in there and smash you, Boy Scut."

"You think you're pretty smart, you like to hear yourself talk," said Reggie, still moving forward, but slowly and with caution. He was excitedly aware of two figures slipping behind the row of maples at the lower

## REGGIE PLANS AN ATTACK

edge of the lawn; a moment more and they would be stealing up along the hedge toward the gate. All he had to do was to keep the enemy waiting and interested. Nothing was easier.

"I dare you to come out on the sidewalk, Boy Scut!" cried Dick. "I dare you to! You Scuts don't any of you dare to go out except in bunches. You're all nothing but Scuts — Boy Scuts."

Now Bill and Freddy were running swiftly up along the hedge; and when it seemed quite safe Reggie ran forward at his reviler. Dick gave a shout of exultation.

"Come on, you Scut, come on!"

And then Bill and Freddy burst upon him, locked him in their arms, and went down with him. "You will call us 'Scuts,' will you!" cried Freddy. "What shall we do with him, Bill?"

"Hold him, hold him, fellows!" cried Reggie. He scooped up a double handful of dirt out of the dusty road. "We'll wash his head for him."

"You will not!" Dick writhed and



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struggled; but Bill, sitting firmly on his shoulders, gripped his hands, and Freddy pinioned his legs.

“Go on, Reggie, rub it in!” cried Bill.

So Reggie rubbed his handfuls of dust into the victim’s hair, scrubbed it in with his knuckles, and admonished him that he was never, never to call a Scout a Scut again under any circumstances.

“That’s right,” agreed Bill. “If I hear of your insulting the Scouts again,— well, I tell you, this will be a picnic beside what I’ll do to you then.”

“Yes, it takes the three of you to pick on me!” retorted Dick, more enraged than humiliated. “Three dirty, cowardly Scuts!”

“Wash his head again, Reggie,” said Bill.

Reggie, enjoying his revenge, consented willingly.

“Now, mind,” said Bill, addressing the victim, “every time you call us ‘Scuts’ you get your head scrubbed. We’ll just sit still a moment and see if you’re tamed.”

Dick breathed heavily in wrath, but he did not utter the offensive epithet.

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"I guess he's tamed," said Freddy at last, getting up. "We can let him go now, Bill; he won't do it again."

"I bet he won't," agreed Bill, rising and watching the disheveled and filthy victim scramble to his feet. "I guess he's tamed, all right. Say, Reggie, we've got to go into your house to wash up."

"Sure," said Reggie. "Dirty business, scrubbing such a head as that."

Dick Dorr hastened homeward, very far from tamed, more completely a wild young savage than ever before in his life.

## VI

### THE CABIN

WHEN Bill and Freddy had time to think over the disciplinary measures in which they had assisted, they arrived independently at conclusions that caused them to feel dissatisfied. A spirit of fair play lurked in the soul of each, and after the event rose up to protest. After all, Dick Dorr had not called them Scuts; they had allowed themselves to be talked into avenging Reggie's grievance. And three against one was hardly fair. An uncomfortable consciousness that their services had been bought and paid for and that they had in fact officiated as Reggie's mercenaries, his hired thugs, grew within them and oppressed them. When they met, they neither of them chose to bring up the subject. They avoided Reggie now more than they had ever done before; and he, feeling that he was estab-

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lished now on a new footing of intimacy, of common experience with them, dogged their steps. In order to maintain close relations with them, he even announced his purpose of becoming a second-class Scout; both Bill and Freddy were preparing themselves for promotion. Not a day passed that they did not have to contrive some scheme for "giving him the slip," as they called it; and then, as likely as not, by some fortuitous, malapropos appearance, he would balk their ingenious efforts.

"By George, I think he's elected us his bodyguard!" Bill muttered to Freddy one day when Reggie joined them on a tramp to the cabin.

"What are you — afraid to go anywhere by yourself, Reggie?" Freddy asked with brutality.

"Afraid nothing; I like company," replied Reggie, and walked on with them untroubled by their coolness.

They found a group of workers, under the direction of George Newcomb, putting the finishing touches to the cabin. In the build-

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

ing operations Reggie had taken little part; he had one day been given an axe and told to cut down some trees, but he proved so clumsy and so afraid of gashing his foot that Newcomb soon relieved him of the unfamiliar weapon. So his only contribution to the Scout clubhouse, as already the log cabin was called, had been in the collection of chunks of moss with which to fill in the chinks; and he had found that task a tedious one and had abandoned it after plastering a limited area of one wall.

On this day his services seemed not to be required, although George was able to give assignments to both Bill and Freddy. He was building a fireplace; he detailed them to bring him stones for it while he was busy cutting a hole for the chimney. Frank Bartlett and Jim Woods were trimming logs with which to make a bunk. The cabin in its almost finished state presented a workman-like appearance; the logs had been neatly flattened off at the corners, the door had been hung on its rawhide leather hinges, the glass sash had been placed in the window,



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and the roof was a masterly example of water-tight thatching. The boys had dug quantities of clay out of the hillside, heaped it upon the loose, thick covering of hay, smoothed and flattened it; they had made the slope of the roof so slight that there was little danger of the clay being washed off by heavy rains.

"Mr. Winton says we can have a house-warming up here a week from Saturday," said Newcomb to his helpers. "We'll bring our supper and have a big fire in our fireplace and spend the evening. We want to have a fine, big fireplace."

"It's a mighty good-looking cabin," said Bill. "You'll have to be an architect, Newc."

"It'll be a mighty snug little place to come to on winter afternoons," said Freddy.

"We'll have to keep some grub up here, so that when we're off snowshoeing or anything we can always drop in and get something to eat," remarked Reggie.

The suggestion was voted impractical.

"Reggie's always thinking about things

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

to eat," said his cousin Frank. "Why don't you take an axe and do a little work, Reggie?"

"I want somebody to practice signaling with," Reggie answered.

"You've got to know how to use an axe as well as how to do signaling if you want to be a second-class Scout," Frank said. "We need another log for the bunk — you see the size. You take this axe and bring me back a log in fifteen minutes, and I'll do signaling with you."

Somewhat reluctantly Reggie laid the axe over his shoulder and started off.

"Here, turn the axe the other way, you goat!" shouted his cousin. "Don't you know you're not to carry it with the edge turned toward your neck! Do you want to cut your throat if you slip?"

"Aw, who's going to slip!" Reggie called back in a snarl of irritation; but he turned the axe to a position of safety.

"That boy a second-class Scout!" Frank was heard to mutter. "About the time I grow a long, gray beard."

"He must be good at something," ob-

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served Newcomb, who had just finished cutting the hole for his chimney.

"Not a thing," declared Frank.

"Mr. Winton told me he thought every fellow was naturally good at something," Newcomb answered. "I have a feeling he's right."

"I'll believe it if you can find anything Reggie's good at," said Frank.

The time passed, and Reggie did not return. Newcomb was the first to express anxiety.

"He does n't know much about handling an axe," he said. "Do you suppose he may have hurt himself?"

Frank glanced at his watch and looked at Newcomb, startled and apprehensive. "He is overdue, is n't he? I did n't realize — Say, fellows, I think we'd better be looking him up."

They all started at a trot for the strip of woods.

"He may have got lost," suggested Bill. "I guess he could easily get lost."

"It's one of the easiest things he could

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do," agreed Frank, welcoming the suggestion with relief. He lifted up his voice: "Reggie! O Reggie!"

"What?" came the answer in Reggie's voice from a point surprisingly close at hand.

"Reggie!" cried his cousin. "Where are you?"

"Right in here."

And no sooner had the searching party penetrated the thicket that formed the fringe of the woods than they came upon the missing Scout. He was sitting cross-legged on the ground, with the Scout Handbook open on his knees; before him lay a small, newly felled tree, partly trimmed of its branches.

"You're a great one, you are!" exclaimed Frank, with the indignation that naturally follows close upon the lifting of apprehension. "Here it's more than half an hour since you went off to bring in that log — we thought you must have got hurt."

"Well, I did," replied Reggie. "I had to stop chopping."

"What's the matter?"

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"I blistered my hand."

He sat unmoved under the storm of ridicule and execration.

"I tore the skin off; I was n't going to keep on hurting myself."

"You knew we wanted that log; if you were too lazy and too tender to get it for us, why did n't you come back and tell us?"

Frank's wrath mounted the higher because of his cousin's nonchalance.

"Why should I? I knew you'd come and get it when you needed it."

"A fine Scout you are! Quitting for a little blister!"

"If I'd had any special reason to keep on I would n't have quit; but I was just chopping the tree to be obliging."

Frank caught up the axe and set to work viciously on the tree; it took him but a few moments to trim it, so furiously did he slash.

"There," he said, "that's all there was to it; you might have done that, blister or no blister."

"Well, he was studying the Scout Book,"



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interposed Newcomb good-naturedly. "What were you studying, Reggie?"

"Oh, just looking through to see what kind of merit badge I might be able to get," Reggie answered.

Frank and Jim Woods and Freddy greeted the reply with satirical laughter; the others grinned.

"Don't you know you have to be both a second-class Scout and a first-class Scout before you can win a merit badge?" asked Frank. "What chance do you think there is of your ever being a first-class Scout?"

"I guess I could if I wanted to be. Anyway, I was looking through to see what I could get a merit badge in. Swimming's about the only thing."

"Swimming!" Frank looked at him as if doubting his sanity. "Why, all you can do is swim the breast stroke."

"Yes, but I could learn the others. It would be easier than learning to do things in blacksmithing and plumbing and so forth," said Reggie.

"If that is n't just like you!" exclaimed

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Frank. "Don't finish up the job that you're given, don't even work on what you need to become a second-class Scout, but waste your time dreaming about a merit badge that only a first-class Scout can win — and in a thing you're no good at! Come on, Jim, let's get that bunk finished."

He and Jim picked up the log and started off, and the others followed. Reggie, loitering in the rear, turned over in his mind the indignity that he had just suffered from his cousin and wondered how he might adequately retaliate. Frank was always poisoning people's minds against him. And the most irritating thing about him was that he gave a fellow so little chance to get even.

Reggie sat on the ground and looked on while the others worked. Presently he began to taunt his cousin.

"I suppose you do enough good deeds every day for your whole patrol, don't you, Frank?"

Freddy grinned, and Reggie felt encouraged; Frank made no answer.

"Do you count it a good deed every time

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you offer any criticism or advice? If you do, you must feel you're just the bestest boy!"

Reggie gave a mincing drawl to the words; both Bill and Freddy laughed.

"It seems too bad you can't keep a record of all your good deeds, Frank. Of course you can't, because then you'd be writing all the time and you'd not have any time for doing them."

"I should call you more silly than funny," observed Frank. "That's what I've always thought about you."

"If I was as bright as you, I suppose everybody else would seem silly," retorted Reggie. "It must make you feel awfully lonely to be so bright. I suppose you won't bother to be a second-class Scout at all — just be a first-class. I never could see why you bothered to be a tenderfoot. I suppose it was as an encouragement to the rest of us."

"It is n't encouragement you need," said Frank. "It's something else."

"That's right, too," agreed Jim Woods; and both Bill and Freddy laughed.

## THE CABIN

It was characteristic of Reggie that he could never bear to have the laugh go against him; now that it had done so he lapsed at once into sulkiness. Content to have him silent, Frank and the others gave their attention to their work.

"Oh, by the way!" Frank suddenly exclaimed. "Father wanted me to tell you fellows he'd give you some first-aid instruction this evening. Any of you that want to come, drop in about eight o'clock. Of course he may be called out on a case, but if he is n't, he'll show you about bandaging and so on."

"I guess we'd better go, Bill," said Freddy. "We may have to bandage Reggie up sometime."

"Oh, he's in no danger from me," said Frank.

"No, but if he ever goes through the Hollow alone, I guess some of us will have to pick up the pieces," replied Freddy.

"Why?"

"Oh, Reggie is n't as popular in the Hollow as he is on the Hill," said Freddy evasively.

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"That's tough luck," observed Jim Woods in a sardonic tone; all except Reggie laughed.

"You'd better go yourself, Reggie, and learn how to put on a bandage," suggested Bill.

"Yes, maybe Dr. Bartlett will show you how to put your nose in a sling," said Freddy.

"You'll need to know how if you ever venture down into the Hollow all by your lonesome."

"Why? What has he been up to?" asked Frank.

"Defending the honor of the troop," replied Freddy. "Never mind, Reggie, we won't give you away."

"I don't know what *you* could find to say about it," remarked Reggie sullenly.

"Don't worry; I won't say anything about it. Only you'd better learn all you can from Dr. Bartlett about how to give yourself first aid."

Notwithstanding this excellent advice Reggie failed to present himself at his uncle's office that evening. Half a dozen members of the troop were assembled there and listened with keen interest to Dr. Bartlett's talk;



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more especially were they interested in the practical demonstrations that he gave of how to put on bandages, how to put on splints, how to produce artificial respiration. He had Frank stretch himself out on the operating table and impersonate a patient with a fractured leg; he had him lie prone upon the floor to be brought back to life after an imaginary drowning; he had him roll up his sleeve to have the flow of blood from a severed artery stanchd and the wound treated. Then he gave each boy an opportunity to deal with some typical imaginary injury, and stood by and advised and directed while the boy struggled with bandage or splints.,

Mr. Winton came in late, looked on, and had a lesson also. He was not so much of a novice as the boys; he and Frank showed a good deal of skill in putting on bandages and answered pretty accurately Dr. Bartlett's questions as to what should be done in a given case. Frank was intending to be a doctor, and had for some time been receiving some special coaching from his father.

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"You and Mr. Winton are such experts that I guess if anybody got hurt on a hike he would n't need to worry," remarked Newcomb.

"I'll never be any good at this first-aid business!" muttered Jim Woods, while he tried to manipulate a bandage roll that was not conducting itself properly. "Guess I'll never be able to make second-class Scout, my fingers are so clumsy."

"Practice, practice," said Dr. Bartlett cheerfully. "That gives you facility after a while. I'll always be glad to help any of you fellows of an evening when I'm at leisure. Drop in at eight o'clock any night, and if I'm free I'll give you a lesson. Every fellow ought to know what to do in certain emergencies; and it's a simple enough thing to learn."

Jim Woods lingered after the others had gone and found an opportunity to say to Frank:

"I got out of Freddy what he and Bill were teasing your cousin about. He did n't want to tell at first; he admitted he was kind of

## THE CABIN

ashamed of the way he'd let himself in to play Reggie's game for him, but he said anyway Bill got caught, too, and that made him feel better. Reggie worked on them both so they felt it was up to them to do something to that young Dorr from the Hollow; he'd been calling Reggie names, and Reggie put it up to Freddy and Bill that they were being insulted, too. So they caught Dorr and held him while Reggie gave him a Dutch scrub — a fierce one, too, Freddy said it was, whole handfuls of dirt out of the street rubbed in. And young Dorr was simply crazy mad, and Freddy says Reggie hardly dares to go outside of his place now alone."

"He's the worst little trouble-maker!" exclaimed Frank. "We'd have had Mike Dorr with us if it had n't been for him; now it's Mike's brother. Instead of getting hold of the fellows in the Hollow, the way Mr. Winton hoped, the troop will be hated by them — just because of Reggie!"

"He ought to resign," declared Jim.

"He never will if you let him know you want him to. The best chance is just to let

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

him get tired himself; then he may drop out."

"He can't drop out too soon to suit me. There's one thing: he'll never make second-class Scout, and if everybody else does, he may get ashamed of hanging on as the only tenderfoot."

"Yes," observed Frank, "except that he does n't know what it is to be ashamed."

Three days later Jim and Frank and George Newcomb started out together with the intention of putting the finishing touches on the log cabin. Frank carried an axe, Newcomb a saw, and Jim represented the commissariat department, swinging a basket that contained the raw materials for their luncheon. When they went out for the day now on such an excursion they scorned to take a carefully prepared luncheon; they had learned to cook a steak on a spit and to roast corn and potatoes in hot ashes, and to make chocolate over an open fire, and the interest of performing the operations gave a pleasant flavor to the food.

They approached the cabin by a wind-

## THE CABIN

ing path that led up over the wooded slope.

“What’s the sound!” exclaimed Frank; they all stopped and listened. A crackling as of burning brush filled the air.

The boys pushed on rapidly; ahead through the trees they saw the glow of flames; another moment and they saw that it was the cabin that was afire. They rushed forward with a shout, and as they broke into the clearing in which the cabin stood, they caught sight of a figure disappearing among the trees on the farther side.

A glance showed that the cabin could not be saved. All one end of it was a mass of flame.

“After him!” shouted Frank. And with wrath and the desire for vengeance in their hearts the three boys threw down their burdens and pursued the fleeing figure.



## VII

### FRANK PRACTICES FIRST AID

**U**NDERBRUSH and fallen timber were thick on the side of the hill down which the fugitive went plunging; although his pursuers could not see him, they could hear his crackling and crashing descent.

"He can't get through down there, it's too steep!" cried Frank. "You fellows go down the ravine, and I'll follow him on this side, and we'll head him off before he gets out on the road."

Jim Woods and George Newcomb made off at full speed in accordance with the suggestion; Frank himself went leaping straight down the slope, jumping fallen logs, ducking and parting twigs and branches with both arms, and getting now and then a smart lash across the cheek. After a few moments he stopped and listened; yes, the crashing sounded not very far ahead. He rubbed his

## PRACTICES FIRST AID

coat-sleeve over his perspiring and smarting face and sprang on with renewed vigor.

Then suddenly, even above the noise and commotion of his own onward rush, he heard a cry. He stopped and heard the cry repeated, a cry of distress and pain, without words. "Hello!" he shouted, and back, after a moment, from somewhere below came an answering appeal, "Help!"

Frank hurried on, and presently broke out of the thicket of heavy growth. Before him was a rocky promontory jutting out into the ravine below and steep on every side. Advancing to the edge, Frank looked down. He saw lying at the foot of the cliff, about twenty feet below him, Dick Dorr, with one leg sprawled out, his face white and his eyes closed.

"Badly hurt?" asked Frank. Then, as there was no reply, he realized that the boy had fainted, and he made his way rapidly, but carefully, down the rocks. He opened his canteen and began pouring water on the boy's white face. At the same time he shouted, "Jim! Newc! Come quick!"

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There was a cry, "We're coming!" from not far up the ravine. Dick Dorr opened his eyes.

"Where are you hurt?" Frank asked.

"My leg." Dick's voice was weak; there was the look of suffering in his eyes. "I tried to move it, and it hurt so that I guess I fainted."

"I guess you did, but you're all right now. I'm afraid from the look of it your leg's broken. Feel hurt anywhere else?"

"No, I guess not."

"The fellows will be here in a moment and then we'll see what we can do. How did you come to do it, anyway?"

"What? Set the fire?"

"No, I was n't thinking of that. I meant just how did you come to hurt your leg."

"Coming down those rocks — I slipped. Fell with my leg under me."

"Lucky it was n't your neck. Let's have a look at it; I won't hurt you."

Gently Frank rolled the boy's trouser leg back. There was no question about it; Dorr's leg was broken below the knee.

## PRACTICES FIRST AID

"Not a compound fracture, anyway," said Frank. He looked up and saw Jim Woods and George Newcomb hurrying down the ravine. "Come on, fellows, and see what we'd better do."

They had hurried breathlessly, expecting to find Frank hard pressed in combat with the incendiary. Their rage and desire to punish seemed to vanish when they looked upon the boy's face, with its expression of suffering, and upon his misshapen leg.

"I guess we'd better get your father out here as soon as possible, Frank," said Jim Woods.

"Yes, but it will take some time to get him. I think that we ought to put on a couple of splints. If we only had the axe here —"

"I'll go after it." Newcomb started off up the slope.

"Father's at Trumansville this morning," said Frank, "and won't be back till afternoon. It's better that Dorr should n't lie here for about three hours without having anything done."

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"I don't feel up to dealing with a broken leg," objected Jim.

"I can put on temporary splints," Frank said. "I guess you could, too, after the lesson father gave you the other night."

"I might if I had to," admitted Jim reluctantly, and Frank replied, "This is a case of have to."

The two boys sat down beside their patient and waited for Newcomb.

"Hurt you much?" Jim asked.

"Some." Then after a moment, during which his eyes had roved apprehensively from one to the other, Dick Dorr said, "I suppose you think it serves me right."

"We have n't said that," replied Frank.

"I bet you think it, anyway." Dick addressed Jim with a note of defiance in his voice that was more pathetic than irritating.

"I've no special reason to think well of you," said Jim; "but I was n't wishing you a broken leg."

"What are you going to do with me? Have me arrested?"

"We'll have to think about it," replied Jim.



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Frank, glancing at the boy's face, was more merciful. "I have a feeling that a broken leg is punishment enough," he remarked. "Probably by the time you're up and about again you'll have decided it does n't pay to burn people's property."

"Why in thunder did you want to burn our cabin, anyway?" inquired Jim.

"I wanted to get even with a bunch of your Scouts that jumped on me and rubbed my face in the dirt," said Dick bitterly. "One of 'em was a fellow that tried to get my brother fired out of his job — lied to get him fired. When he got a couple of you to jump on me, I made up my mind you were all alike. I wanted to get even with the whole bunch; that's all."

"Kind of rough on the rest of us," commented Jim.

"Well, I thought if you stood for fellows like those, you must be pretty much all alike."

There was silence for a few moments, and then Jim said, "What did you do to get such a blaze? That cabin was built out of green logs. You must have poured oil over it."

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"I did," replied Dick defiantly. "I lugged a half-gallon can up here. And I heaped leaves and sticks up against the walls so as to make sure of a good fire."

"I don't know but what we ought to hand you over to the police," said Jim.

"It does n't do a broken leg any good to talk like that," said Frank. "And my own opinion is that a broken leg and five or six weeks in bed are punishment enough. We'll have the cabin rebuilt long before he'll be about again."

Dick looked at Frank gratefully, then closed his eyes. The throbbing pain in his leg made him half faint; he hoped that whatever they decided to do with him, they would not discuss it any more just now. Frank recognized the signs of distress and said:

"Give him a drink, Jim; I've emptied my canteen."

Jim unfastened the canteen from his belt, and then, while Dick propped himself up on one elbow, held it to his lips. Somehow the act of thus ministering to one disabled and helpless softened Jim's heart.

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"I guess you've had a lesson, and we'll let it go at that," he said.

Presently Newcomb arrived with the axe and the saw; under Frank's directions he trimmed two sections of a smooth, straight maple limb to serve as splints. "It would be better, of course, if we could get two flat pieces of board," said Frank, "but these will do well enough."

Meanwhile, Jim had been gathering sphagnum moss for packing round the splints.

"We'll try not to hurt you," Frank said, as he knelt beside the patient. "Now, Jim, you get your padding ready; Newc, you stand by with the bandages." He passed his first-aid outfit to Newcomb, who took out the gauze roll and bent over, ready to follow instructions.

Frank slipped his left hand gently under the injured leg just above the fracture, and his right hand under and just below the fracture; then, lifting gently, he straightened the leg out, and at the same time Newcomb passed bandages under it. Dick made no sound, but he was gritting his teeth, and his pale face was beaded with sweat.

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"The worst's over," said Frank. He pressed the splints against the leg, one on the outside, the other on the inside, both reaching from the knee to below the ankle. "Now, pack in the padding," he directed; and while he held the splints in place, Jim spread the moss and leaves with careful fingers.

Tying the splints in place with the gauze bandage and with handkerchiefs was quickly accomplished.

"Hurt you much now?" asked Frank.

"A good deal; but not so that I can't stand it."

"I'm afraid you won't think it's much fun being carried down to the road. It's pretty bad going through this ravine; but we'll take it slowly and jar you just as little as possible. Come on, Newc, and we'll cut some poles for a stretcher. And while we're doing that, Jim, don't you want to go after the lunch-basket? We'll all need something to eat after this job is done. I guess it will even give Dorr an appetite."

The patient smiled feebly at the idea.

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It took Frank and Newcomb nearly half an hour to find and trim two stretcher poles to their satisfaction. By the time they had returned with them, they found that Jim had started a fire and was preparing to fry the bacon and potatoes.

"Dorr thought maybe he'd like his food better before the trip down to the road than after it," explained Jim.

"That was just a kind of a joke; I don't know as I'll have much appetite at any time," said Dick.

Jim had a brisk blaze going in the little fireplace that he had built out of a few stones. He placed his griddle on the fire and when it was well heated began slicing the bacon into it. Then he unpacked some sandwiches that had been folded in a napkin, and when the bacon seemed to be done to just the proper degree of crispness, he forked it out, a slice to every sandwich. Next, he sliced some raw potatoes into the griddle and soon was dishing out what he inaccurately termed "French fried."

Dick Dorr was not too badly hurt to eat;



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the three others watched him with solicitude and, as they noted his appetite, with increasing satisfaction.

"This grub certainly will give me strength enough to stand the journey home," he remarked, with a cheerful grin.

"Oh, we'll get you down, all right," said Frank. "And I don't believe it will hurt you much."

"As long as I can feel easy in my mind, that's the main thing. You fellows have been mighty decent to me; but — say, look here. If you tell anybody what you know and it should get to the fellows that rubbed my face in the dirt, they'd have me arrested."

"That's probably true," said Frank. "As far as I'm concerned, I shan't tell anybody."

"Same here," said Jim and Newcomb.

"Very likely it will be a couple of days before anybody learns about the cabin," added Frank. "We'll simply say we had been up to it, and when we were coming away we found you with a broken leg. Then nobody will ever suspect. What do you say, fellows?"

"It's the only sure way of keeping people

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from suspecting," said Jim. "For then they'll think the cabin burned after we found Dorr, not before."

"And when we hear it's been burned we'll have to appear surprised and shocked," Newcomb said.

The subterfuge seemed an innocent one, and all three seemed rather well pleased with themselves for having hit on it.

"It will spike Reggie's guns absolutely," chuckled Frank. "Otherwise, he'd be cocksure you did it, Dorr. Now, he won't know what to think. He'll probably lay it to your brother."

Dick did not smile at that idea. "I'd almost as soon have your cousin know as have Mike know," he said. "He'd feel terribly. Say, I realize now what a low-down thing I've done. I probably would n't have realized it if you had n't treated me so white. I don't suppose I can ever make it up to you fellows, but I'll tell you this, I'll let other people's things alone from now on."

"And while you're in the business of good resolutions," remarked Frank, "you

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might decide to let other people alone from now on."

Dick nodded. "Mike's been telling me I'm too fresh. I suppose he's right about it."

When the feast was ended and the fire extinguished, the boys made preparations for departure. Jim and Frank took up the poles, standing at opposite ends and facing each other; then, while they bent forward, Newcomb peeled their coats off over their heads, first Frank's, then Jim's. The operation left the coats inside out with the poles running through the sleeves.

"Better if we had your coat, too, Newc," said Frank.

So Newcomb took Frank's place and had his coat peeled off over his head and added to the two others. Then there was a stretcher long enough to take the patient comfortably at full length.

Lifting carefully, the boys got Dick on it without hurting him; then Frank took his position between the poles at the forward end, Jim at the rear, and at a given word the two lifted them simultaneously. Newcomb

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walked beside them, carrying axe and saw and luncheon basket, and ready to relieve either of them when the time came.

The progress down the ravine was slow and difficult, interrupted with frequent pauses for rest. At last they emerged by the roadside, and there, on a level strip of grass that was shaded by ash and maple trees, they laid Dick down.

"Pretty well shaken up?" Frank asked.

"Not so bad as if you had n't put those splints on."

"If some one comes along with a good, big automobile, we might get you home in short order now. Some one will surely be passing pretty soon."

A farmer driving an empty wagon was the first to appear. He displayed a sympathetic interest and offered transportation, but Frank declined it on behalf of his patient. "I'm afraid he'd be jolted about too much," he said. "We'll wait till some one comes by with a smooth-running automobile."

They did not have to wait long. By good fortune the next person to appear on the road

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was Dr. Bartlett himself, driving his big touring-car. He supervised the work of getting the patient into the car; saw him stretched out on the cushioned seat of the tonneau; and then, with Frank and Jim watching over Dick and with Newcomb in the seat beside him, drove carefully into the town.

Mrs. Dorr glanced out of her window at the unwonted spectacle of an automobile stopping in front of her house; then, frightened, she hurried to the door.

"I'm all right, mother." The cheery words greeted her as she appeared upon the steps; they were supplemented at once by the remark of the pleasant-looking gentleman who was helping to lift her boy out of the car, "Nothing but a simple fracture; he can be fixed up in no time."

Dick was soon laid on the old sofa in the living room; and then Dr. Bartlett, turning to Mrs. Dorr, said:

"Now if you'll tell me who your doctor is, I'll get him over here for you at once."

"I have n't any doctor," replied Mrs. Dorr. "We have n't lived here long."



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"This is Dr. Bartlett, mother," interposed Dick.

"Oh, if you would tend to him!" The mother looked at the physician with immediate trust and appeal.

"Right off. Can you get a bed ready for him? Frank, you take the car, run home and bring me some splints and bandages."

By the time that Frank had returned, Dick was undressed and in bed. Mrs. Dorr was standing by, pale but resolutely cheerful, and Jim and Newcomb were expecting to be ordered from the room at any moment, yet were hopefully lingering.

"My son knows enough to be of some help to me," Dr. Bartlett remarked to the mother. "These other fellows — do you want to stay?" He glanced at them with a smile. Their faces showed their eagerness. "Any objection, Mrs. Dorr? They're Boy Scouts, and they want to learn all they can."

Mrs. Dorr had no objection to their presence, and thus it was that Jim and Newcomb attended their first clinic.

After the operation was finished, Dr. Bart-

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lett said, "In a few weeks his leg will be as good as it ever was, Mrs. Dorr. He'll have some pain for the next few days, but it won't be any worse than what he's already had — if that's any comfort to him. I'll drop in tomorrow and see how he's getting along."

Mrs. Dorr detained the doctor at the door for a moment while the boys passed outside.

"I don't know but what I should have explained to you first, doctor," she said, "that I can't pay you right off."

"Now never mind that," said Dr. Bartlett cheerfully. "That's the last thing in the world you need worry about, and don't, for any such reason as that, hesitate to come to me at any time."

He gave her a friendly smile, and did not wait to hear her murmured expression of gratitude.

When he drove the three boys up to his house, they observed that Reggie was seated on his piazza across the way. Dr. Bartlett went into his study; Reggie came sauntering over, animated by his usual motive, idle curiosity.

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"What you fellows been doing?" he asked.

"Watching dad set a fellow's leg," replied Frank.

"How did that happen?"

"We'd gone up to the cabin and were coming away," said Frank, "when we found a fellow unconscious with a broken leg. He'd fallen off a cliff. We managed to bring him to and carry him down to the road, and then dad happened to come along and took him home. The fellow was Dick Dorr."

"Huh!" said Reggie. "Well, if anybody had to have a broken leg, I'd just as soon he should be the one. Now if something of the same kind could only happen to his brother!"

"You are certainly the limit!" exclaimed Jim Woods in disgust. "Frank, don't you suppose your father would let us have a couple of splints and a bandage so that we could practice setting a leg? I want to try while it's fresh in my mind; I want to see if I could n't bandage it up that slick way he did it."

"All right," said Frank. "Come on in. You coming, Reggie?"

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"No," said Reggie. "I guess I'll go down-street and get an ice-cream soda."

It was some time since he had felt free to stroll as far as the village; he walked along with a thirsty palate and a comfortable sense of security. He reflected that there was something quite providential in the way the wicked were punished.

## VIII

### ADDITIONS TO THE TROOP

ON the evening of the day following that on which Dick Dorr had met with his accident, Frank Bartlett, Jim Woods, George Newcomb, and three other members of the Hilltop Troop were in Dr. Bartlett's study, having some further instruction in bandaging. There was a knock on the door; Frank opened it.

"Some one to see you, Mr. Frank, out in the front hall," said the maid.

Frank left the room, passed the library, in which Mr. Winton was sitting with Elizabeth, — Frank wondered why a man should want to sit so much with a girl, however fond of her he might be, when there was something interesting going on in the next room with a lot of fellows, — and came into the front hall. Michael Dorr stepped forward out of the shadow.



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"Hello!" Frank said. "Glad to see you. How's your brother getting on?"

"Fine," Michael answered. "Some pain, but he's doing fine. I guess you'll be surprised at my coming up here. I wanted to tell you I've changed my mind. I'd like mighty well to come into the Boy Scouts, if you're willing to have me."

"Good for you! Sure, we're willing — delighted! What has made you change your mind?"

"Well, the good turn you fellows did to Dick, for one thing. Why, if you had n't come along, he might have lain up there in the woods till he died. And he said you were so smart at fixing him up. I'd like to learn how to do all those tricks."

"You've come to the right house. Dad's in his office now showing a bunch of fellows. Come in and meet the crowd; I'll tell them you're going to be one of us."

"Had n't you better talk it over with them first? There might be some objection."

"No, not from any in that crowd. But

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wait just a second; I'll get Mr. Winton to come out and talk with you."

The Scout Master expressed great satisfaction at the news and assured Michael that the troop would welcome him as a member. "But we don't want you just by yourself," added Mr. Winton. "We want you to bring seven others, — enough to form a full patrol, — or better still, fifteen others, to form two patrols. Can you pick up the right sort of fellows — fellows that you can count on to be interested?"

"Yes, easily," said Michael. "Especially after what happened to my brother; that's made lots of the fellows feel it would be worth while to belong to the Scouts."

"You round them up and bring as many as you can to my house to-morrow evening," said Mr. Winton.

"Could a place be held open for my brother till he gets well?"

"Oh, surely."

"Do you think your brother would want to join?" asked Frank.

"I guess there's no doubt about that."

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"In spite of the fact that there are one or two fellows in the troop that he's not on the best of terms with?"

Michael was sure that would make no difference to Dick now — any more than to himself. "A fellow sees sometimes that he ought to make a sacrifice of his pride."

"Come into dad's office," said Frank. "You'll get some points that are useful and you'll meet some of the fellows. You'd better come in with us, too, Mr. Winton."

"I may drop in after a while," replied Mr. Winton seriously, affecting to ignore Frank's grin.

The next hour was the happiest that Michael Dorr had passed since his family had come to live in the town. It opened a new life to him; not only did it offer the promise of pleasant friendships, but it brought him into contact for the first time with the work of the profession that attracted him beyond any other, the profession to which he secretly aspired. It was pleasant to have the fellows welcome him; but it was more than pleasant, it was

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exciting, to be receiving a practical lesson in surgery.

Dr. Bartlett was aware of an expression in the newcomer's eyes that was different from that in the eyes of the others who watched his demonstrations. There was a keenness, an intentness, a comprehensive yearning in those gray eyes that interested and attracted the doctor. He had been bandaging Frank's upper arm; he unwound the bandage and told Michael to see if he could put it on.

With an expression of the utmost concentration Michael applied himself to the task. He carried out to the last detail the method that Dr. Bartlett had employed; he used his fingers in just the same way, remembered and reproduced exactly each gesture, and put on the bandage so skillfully that Dr. Bartlett said:

"Ever had any first-aid instruction before?"

"No, sir," Michael answered.

"You make good use of your eyes and your fingers."

Michael said nothing, but felt a glow of

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pride that warmed to stronger life his faint, secret ambition. A few minutes later Dr. Bartlett said:

"That's all for this evening, boys." Then he turned to Michael. "We have this class Tuesday and Thursday evenings, unless I'm called away. I hope you'll come whenever you feel disposed."

"I'll certainly be regular," said Michael earnestly.

He did not notice the other boys very much. He was too intent, too preoccupied, with what Dr. Bartlett had shown him and had said. He did not notice the specially interested glances that passed between two when Frank Bartlett explained that he was not only coming into the troop himself, but that he was going to bring in his brother and a number of other fellows.

Afterwards, as he was walking home, it did strike him as rather odd that one fellow should have repeated in identical terms the question that Frank Bartlett had already asked: "Do you think your brother would want to join?"

Odd as it was that this question should



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have been twice put, it seemed to Michael no more strange than Dick's response upon learning that he had been committed to candidacy for membership in the troop.

"I have n't the nerve; they would n't want me," he said.

"Sure they would; the Scout Master asked me to get a bunch of fellows."

"Yes; but they would n't want *me*."

"What's got into you that you're so modest all of a sudden?"

"Oh, after the way I've had run-ins with them, I would n't want to join."

"As long as they're willing to have you, you bet you're going to join. I told those fellows you would; and you will."

"What fellows?"

"Oh, Bartlett — not the little skunk — and Woods and two or three others."

"What did they say?"

"I don't remember that they said much, except that one or two asked if I thought you would want to join."

"That means they don't want me to. I don't go where I'm not wanted."

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"You'd better go to sleep," said Michael good-naturedly. "Go to sleep and forget it. You can't be much of a Scout while you're on your back with a broken leg; and by the time you're up again you'll feel differently."

Dick made no response. He did not go to sleep for a long time that night; the pain in his leg was bad, and his mind was as uncomfortable as his leg. How could he become a member of the Boy Scout organization when three of the fellows in it would always know what he had done? The fact that they had asked with surprise if he had wanted to join was enough to indicate their attitude toward him. They had been decent to him when he was hurt, but as soon as he was well again they would simply think of him as the fellow that had burned their property. They could not help being cold to him; they would not want to have him around. And he would not want to be around with them — feeling that they were in possession of knowledge that must always cause them to look askance at him. Besides, there was that "Scut" Reggie! To be associated in

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any organization with him — the thought was intolerable.

Yet, on the other hand, Dick admitted to himself a longing to join the organization, to become a comrade of the three fellows who had requited injury with kindness, to let them see through closer knowledge of him that he was not really the kind of fellow that they must now be thinking him. Imagination and pride were contending in his heart — imagination in which lay promise of improvement, and pride in which lurked danger of deterioration. It was a conflict not to be decided in a night.

Not to Dick alone was the proposal to introduce him into the Scout troop disturbing. Frank Bartlett and Jim Woods gave themselves the joint pleasure of breaking the news to Reggie. They called on him the morning after Michael Dorr had made his application for membership; Reggie, comfortable, lazy, in white tennis flannels and a soft shirt fetchingly decorated with a red tie, was reclining in a long wicker chair on the side piazza. He was reading a novel of the

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more lurid sort. On a table beside him was a plate of chocolate fudge, to which without altering his recumbent position he could stretch forth his hand.

Before even speaking to Reggie, Frank pounced upon the dish of fudge, said, "Have some, Jim?" and after offering it to his friend, dug out most of what remained. Reggie followed these high-handed actions with eyes that clearly indicated displeasure.

"We're going to have a new patrol in the troop, Reggie," said Frank. "Have some more fudge, Jim?" He again passed the plate and again helped himself liberally. When he returned it to the table there was but one piece left.

"You need n't help yourself to fistfuls!" exclaimed Reggie indignantly.

"I guess you did n't take in what I was saying, or you would n't think so much about fudge," responded Frank. "There's going to be a new patrol in the troop. The two Dorrs are to be in it, and some other fellows from the Hollow. Maybe they will get up two patrols."

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"You mean they're coming right in with us — going to be part of our troop?"

"Yes."

"Why don't they have a troop of their own instead of butting into ours?"

"They're not butting in. We've invited them to come in."

"Who invited them?"

"Oh, a few of us. Jim and Mr. Winton and I."

"I don't see what right you had. I bet the crowd would n't stand for it if they knew."

"You can go round and tell them if you like."

"You'd better make up your mind to accept conditions as you find them, Reggie," observed Jim. "Of course, if you feel you can't do that, there's always one way out."

"What's that?"

"Resignation."

"Nobody's going to drive me into resigning!" declared Reggie. "Do you mean to say that those muckers are to go out on hikes with us — use *our* cabin, that *we* built!"



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Jim looked at Frank and Frank looked at Jim.

"There would n't be much cabin if all there was of it was what you built, Reggie," remarked Frank.

Reggie wondered what there was so funny in that observation as to cause Frank and Jim to snicker.

"Anyway, I think it's a thing that should have been voted on by the whole troop. I'm sure most of the fellows up here on the Hill don't want to associate with those muckers down in the Hollow."

"You make me more than a little sick," observed Frank.

"You associate too much by yourself, Reggie," said Jim in more mild reproof.

"He can't altogether help that," said Frank.

But remarks that would have had for most boys a cruel sting glanced harmlessly from the armor of Reggie's self-esteem.

"You fellows can do as you like about the muckers in the Hollow," he said. "All I know is I'm not going to let myself get intimate with them."

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"After that, let's have some more fudge, Jim."

Frank passed the plate over to his friend, who declined with a smile. Frank then swept up the last remaining piece of candy and put the empty plate down on the table. Reggie muttered something under his breath that sounded very like "hog."

At that moment Bill and Freddy made their appearance, hurrying up the hill; they turned in at Dr. Bartlett's gate.

Frank set up a shout. "Hi, there, Bill! Hello, Freddy!"

Bill and Freddy turned and hastened across the street. Their faces and their bearing showed excitement.

"Say, fellows, what do you know about this?" began Freddy, when he was still some distance off. "Bill and I have just been up to the cabin — and it's burned to the ground!"

"The cabin burned!" exclaimed Frank. And Jim cried, "All of it?"

"The whole thing," said Bill. "Right to the ground!"

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Frank and Jim looked at each other with what they hoped was a stupefied expression.

"Why, we were up there only day before yesterday!" said Frank.

"Yes, the day we found young Dorr with a broken leg," appended Jim.

"Then it must have been done yesterday," declared Bill. "I'd like to get my hands on the fellow that would do such a dirty thing as that!"

"If young Dorr was n't at home with a broken leg, I'd pick him as the one," said Reggie; "but as it could n't have been him, it was most likely his brother."

"Of course it was n't," said Frank. "You know he works at Blaisdell's during the day, and yesterday evening he was at our house. And what would be the point of his burning down the cabin when he was just coming into the troop?"

"Just the same, of all that gang in the Hollow he's the most likely one," reiterated Reggie.

"It was no accident, that's one sure thing," declared Bill. "That cabin would

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never have burned if some one had n't fixed it just right to burn. I bet some one poured oil over it, to get it burned to the ground."

"And you've invited a gang of the sort that would do that to join our troop!" Reggie looked accusingly at his cousin.

"You don't know anything about who did it," Frank retorted.

"It was somebody from the Hollow, that's sure."

"Well, if it was, the fellows from the Hollow will have a good chance to help in building a new cabin. But what's the use of arguing with you! Come on, Jim; we must see if any one else knows anything about this burning."

The indignation of the different members of the troop was great, but their inability to concentrate it on a specific object and the complete absence of a clue to the guilty person caused it to be of short duration. They all agreed with Reggie that probably some one from the Hollow was the incendiary; they none of them accepted as plausible his idea that Michael Dorr was guilty. The

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reasons that Frank had given were too convincing.

Reggie was one of the few members of the troop who were not present in Mr. Winton's study on the evening when Michael Dorr and six friends of his from the Hollow took the Scout oath and were admitted as "tender-feet." Mr. Winton addressed the new members.

"We are all mighty glad to welcome you fellows into the organization. We all hope that it will be the beginning from which will spring greater unity of interest and friendliness of spirit than have hitherto prevailed in the two sections of the town. When fellows begin to work together, they begin to understand each other, and when they begin to understand each other, they cease to have feelings of enmity. So far the fellows of the troop have enjoyed the Scout work; they expect to enjoy it more with your coöperation, and they hope that you'll enjoy it just as much. If any of you want a task to work at, there is one that I can mention. The fellows of the troop had built a log cabin that



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was to be a sort of troop clubhouse up on Hartley Hill; about a week ago it was burned down. Some one must have deliberately set fire to it. Some one who for some reason that I can't imagine had a grudge against the troop. Now, we want to put up another cabin; we simply must hope that it won't be burned down, too. We shall welcome your help in the work of rebuilding. George Newcomb here is the supervising architect, and he will be glad to give any information you may need."

"I'm going up there to-morrow afternoon," said Newcomb. "About two o'clock. I hope some of you fellows will come along and bring axes and saws."

Michael looked forward to the expedition. Saturday afternoon was the only afternoon that he had off from duty at Mr. Blaisdell's. This Saturday would be, he felt, the pleasantest holiday of the summer. He liked working in the woods; he knew he should like working with such fellows as Newcomb and Frank Bartlett.

When he got home Friday evening, his

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brother Dick was eager to hear all that he could tell about the meeting. Michael described the proceedings, the reciting of the Scout law, the examination in the history of the flag and in the tying of knots, the taking of the Scout oath; and finally he said:

"I told them you were coming in as soon as you're well."

Dick made no answer; his brother, watching him closely, saw that he looked unhappy.

"I tell you what I think," said Michael slowly. "I think the fellow that ruined Mrs. Bartlett's garden was the same one that burned the Scouts' cabin."

There was a moment of silence.

"What makes you think so?"

Michael was aware of a certain constraint under the apparent carelessness of the utterance.

"They're the kind of thing that not more than one fellow would be likely to do. Some fellow with a grudge."

Dick changed the subject. "Was that goat, Reggie, there to-night?"

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"No. I don't believe he's especially popular with the fellows on the Hill."

"I would n't mind going into the Scouts so much if I did n't have to see him."

"You probably won't have to do anything more than see him. That's all I expect to do. The fellows feel quite badly over losing their cabin. I'm going up there to-morrow to help build a new one. I want to do what I can to make up for the loss; they all feel it was some one from the Hollow that set the fire."

"I'm tired; my leg's been hurting me this evening," said Dick. "I want to go to sleep."

## IX

### "A SCOUT IS TRUSTWORTHY"

"WITH you to help us, we can put up the cabin in no time," Newcomb said after noting the speed with which the leader of the new patrol felled trees and the accuracy with which he trimmed them and cut them into logs. "Can you come up here with me a couple of days next week?"

"I'm afraid not. Saturday afternoon is the only time I have off."

"That's hard luck. Where did you learn to handle tools?"

"Father was a carpenter; now and then he would give me lessons in the shop."

"I guess we'll make you do all the fine work; I can see by the way you go at it I'm not in your class, and there's nobody else in the troop that's especially clever with tools. Unless some of you fellows have something you have n't shown yet?"

## A SCOUT IS TRUSTWORTHY

Newcomb surveyed the group of new members.

They shook their heads. They could split and chop kindling wood, one of them said, and that was about all.

"With a fellow like that for your patrol leader, you ought soon to learn," said Newcomb.

The remark pleased not only the patrol leader, it pleased the whole patrol. It made them feel that already they had contributed a superior talent to the organization. It gave them as a body and even individually more self-confidence. They had assumed a self-confidence that afternoon that they did not feel; they had been boisterous and noisy on the walk up to the cabin; they had been swaggering to show the fellows from the Hill that they were not to be overawed, that they would not stand for any condescension. They had been allowed to go their own way and were beginning to be a little tired of it. A tribute of admiration to their leader was all they needed to make them cast off their challenging air of self-sufficiency.



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Going home that afternoon, they fraternized with the members of the two Hill patrols as they had not done on the outward trip. No one seemed cool to them or unwelcoming. Reggie had absented himself from the gathering, as he had done on the night when the new patrol was sworn in. Michael and one or two others had looked for him, prepared for some unpleasantness; now they began to entertain the hope that he had resigned from the troop.

He made his appearance, however, one evening the following week at his uncle's house when a first-aid demonstration was in progress. He had learned that all the other members of Jim Woods's patrol were to take the examination for second-class Scout in a few days; the emulous spark in his lethargic spirit had been kindled by the news. He did not want to remain the only "tender-foot," to be ridiculed and despised. So he decided to pick up the required knowledge as speedily as possible.

There were eight or nine fellows in Dr. Bartlett's study when he entered; he noticed

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at the first glance that Michael Dorr was among them. On the floor, with coat off and shirt sleeve rolled up, lay Freddie; Dr. Bartlett stood close by.

"We'll suppose the arm to be broken just here," said Dr. Bartlett. "Then the proper treatment is — Oh, hello, Reggie! You're in this, too, are you?"

"I need a little more first-aid knowledge than I have now in order to be a second-class Scout," explained Reggie. "I thought maybe I could get it from you, Uncle George."

"Maybe you can, if you don't expect to get it all in an evening," replied Dr. Bartlett. "Now, then, Freddie, your arm is broken just about here; it's lying beside you on the ground this way. Jim, show us what you would do."

Jim Woods demonstrated with splints and bandage; Dr. Bartlett corrected and criticized the demonstration.

"Dorr, you're next," said Dr. Bartlett.

Much smoother, much more professional, than Jim's attempt was Michael's. Dr. Bartlett watched him, noted the movements

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of his deft fingers, the absorbed expression of his face — and then glanced round at Reggie. That youth was lolling back in an easy-chair, contemplating the farther wall with apparently disdainful eyes. Dr. Bartlett's eyes narrowed and his lips thinned as he looked at him.

When Michael had finished, Dr. Bartlett said:

“Reggie, you take Freddie's place and impersonate the patient with the fractured arm. Watch closely while Dorr goes through the motions of setting it and bandaging it.”

“I feel I'd learn more if somebody else were to bandage it,” said Reggie.

“If you come to me for instruction you must put yourself in my hands,” said Dr. Bartlett, with asperity. “You should be grateful to me for assigning the most skillful first-aid man in the class to help you. He can't very well be grateful to me for giving him such a subject, but as he has the true professional instinct he is of course willing to practice on — well, I may say anything.”

Reggie, irritated by the rebuke and by the

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laughter it evoked, lay down on the floor. He displayed not merely inattention to the technique of bandaging, but distaste for the personality of the bandager; curling lips and half-averted gaze showed plainly enough his feeling.

"Very well done," was Dr. Bartlett's comment when Michael, working imperturbably, had finished. "No doubt you feel you could have done better if the patient had been etherized."

There was again an outbreak of laughter; but Reggie, with curling lips, seemed superior to ridicule.

"The ungrateful type of patient is the meanest a doctor has to contend with — and the hardest to do a good job on. He's always trying in little ways, without doing himself any serious harm, to frustrate your achievement, so that he need n't feel under any obligation to you. Now, Reggie, suppose you and Dorr change places. Let's see you bandage Dorr's arm."

Dr. Bartlett stood by grimly and offered his nephew not a word of helpful suggestion

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or criticism. Reggie went about his work with loathing. To have to handle Michael's muscular forearm seemed to him really more intolerable than to have Michael's fingers pressing lightly upon his own arm. He did not care how many mistakes he made; all he was interested in was getting done with the job as soon as possible.

"Looks more like a bundle of wash than a nicely dressed arm," commented Dr. Bartlett, when his nephew had finished. "You have a good deal to learn, Reggie — quite a good deal to learn."

Reggie looked sulky and made no response.

Dr. Bartlett gave demonstrations in the art of bandaging other injuries than fractures of the arm; after each demonstration he told off the pupils in pairs to practice. And every time he assigned Michael and Reggie to each other. "Dorr, you're the cleverest, and Reggie, you're the greenest; Reggie, you can learn from watching Dorr, and Dorr, you'll find by dealing with Reggie just what it means to have a patient who can't give you any help. That's the kind of patient one



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generally has; the experience should be useful to you."

For Reggie it was an unsuccessful evening. He chafed so under the enforced partnership that he derived no benefit from it; Dorr's calm absorption in the task and utter disregard of his person exasperated him. Reggie went home that night disgusted with the whole Boy Scout organization, not caring whether he ever was a second-class Scout or not, and with a feeling of animosity toward his uncle smouldering in his heart. His uncle and Frank had the same hateful characteristics — always trying to put a fellow in a hole!

Meanwhile, Dr. Bartlett had been watching Michael Dorr with eyes more than ever interested and sympathetic. He detained Michael a few minutes after the other boys had gone.

"Sit down," he said. "I want to talk to you. What is your ambition in life?"

"To be a doctor."

"I thought as much. And what's your plan?"

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"I have n't any."

"Of course what you ought to do is to go to college for the next four years and then enter a medical school."

"That puts medicine out of the question for me, then," said Michael. He tried to speak cheerfully, but he looked disappointed and unhappy.

"My boy's going to college in the autumn," said Dr. Bartlett. "He expects to study medicine. Don't you think you could arrange matters so that you and he could go through together?"

"No, there's not a chance of it. What little I can earn is needed at home."

Dr. Bartlett reflected a moment. "Anyway, keep up your interest," he said. "Don't give up hope. Opportunities come to every one. You'll make a good surgeon, if you're given half a chance."

Michael went away, alternating between depression and elation. Talk with Dick while he was getting ready for bed turned the scales in favor of depression.

"I don't see how you could so much as

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touch the skin of that skunk!" exclaimed Dick upon hearing what the evening work of his brother had been. "I could n't. Or if I did, I'd give him something to howl about!"

"There's something more important than just paying off old scores," replied Michael.

"It does n't do to be too tame; you'll never get ahead in this world if you're that. If I had your brains and you had my pep we'd make a great team."

"Well, how are you going to treat young Bartlett when you come into the Scouts and find yourself thrown with him?" asked Michael.

"I won't have anything to do with him."

"Not even under orders?"

Dick was silent for a moment. "Well," he said, "I'll have some fun showing him up at every turn. And I bet I can do it, too."

"You don't need to pretend friendship for him, but you should n't go in to be a trouble-maker."

"He's the trouble-maker, and I'll make all the trouble for him I can," declared Dick.

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"That means trouble for yourself and for others, too. Have n't you found that out by this time, Dick?"

"What do you mean?" Dick asked.

"I guess you know without my telling you."

Dick's silence confirmed his brother's suspicions. Michael turned out the light and got into bed.

"Leg aching?" he asked.

"No."

"Good-night."

"Good-night, Mike."

Dick's voice sounded forlorn and appealing. Something in the sound of it reached Michael's heart; after a moment he got out of bed and went to his brother's side and put his hand on his shoulder.

"When you get up and get into things again, Dick, you're going to feel differently; you're going to be all right. I know you're all right, Dick; you don't want to go on looking at things all wrong."

Dick was silent a moment; then he said in a subdued voice:

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"No, I don't, Mike. I know it would be better if I was more like you."

"I don't know that at all," replied Michael. "I know you're coming out all right just because you're yourself. There's lots of good stuff in you, Dick. Good-night."

He patted his shoulder and crawled back into bed. The little act of brotherly faith and affection made Dick want to cry, made him want to confess everything, but stubbornness withheld him. He lay awake long after Michael was breathing regularly in sleep; he resolved fervently that he would henceforth try to do nothing that he would be ashamed to have Michael know; but what was past was past, and he was being punished enough for it, anyway, in having to lie round with a broken leg.

It would not do any good to tell Michael the whole story; it would just make him feel badly — and, besides, he suspected, anyway! So Dick at last fell asleep in the midst of his muddled reasoning; the next morning he and Michael made no reference to their talk. Michael asked him how he was feeling,



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brought him water to wash with, and later brought him his breakfast. Dick had a feeling that Michael was watching him hopefully, expecting him to unburden himself; the feeling was uncomfortable and made Dick appear sullen. He had had this feeling about Michael for some days, and it led to constraint in their intercourse. Then apparently Michael ceased to be expectant or hopeful or wistful — whatever it was that made Dick uncomfortable; and Dick regained his outward cheerfulness. But lying on his bed day after day, having for the most part no company but his thoughts, he was insensibly tending to take a more serious view of his duties and responsibilities and of his future than he had ever done before; he began to appreciate what power he had of increasing or diminishing the worries and anxieties of his mother; and he understood better than ever Michael's stalwart effort to keep her hopeful and happy. So two things did Dick learn through his long convalescence — consideration for his mother and appreciation of Michael.

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Meanwhile, Michael and the boys from the Hollow that he had brought into the Scouts were making themselves worthy members of that organization. They proved less noisy and vociferous than such doubters as Freddie and Bill had expected to find them; in many matters they were even diffident; and of their enthusiasm for the Scouts there could not long be any question. It was only a short time before another patrol of boys from the Hollow was formed, all just as eager as the first had been. The work of rebuilding the cabin went forward rapidly; so also did the work of preparing for second-class Scout examinations. Mr. Winton gave the tests on different days; out of the two Hill patrols, Reggie was the only member who failed to advance from the class of "tenderfoot." His showing in woodcraft and in first-aid was inadequate. When he learned that Freddie and Bill had passed, he went to Mr. Winton and complained.

"I know that if they got through, I ought to have," he said.

"Maybe you ought to have, but you

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did n't make the necessary showing," replied the Scout Master. "You can try again in another month."

"It's the limit! I don't know that I want to stay in a thing where I'm the only one that did n't get ahead — and where a lot of fellows from the slums are let in, whether we want them or not."

"Of course if you're not in sympathy with the organization and the way it's managed, you're at liberty to withdraw from it," said Mr. Winton.

"Well, I don't know that I want to do that, either!" whined Reggie. "Seems to me, though, as if everybody sort of had it in for me. I don't see why."

"People don't have it in for a fellow who does his share and does his best," replied the Scout Master. "They're very apt to have it in for the shirker and the slacker."

"I don't know why anybody should think I was one of those things," said Reggie virtuously.

"Perhaps you have never shown with

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sufficient definiteness that you are not," said Mr. Winton.

"If I were, of course I'd resign from the Scouts when I felt I was unjustly treated," Reggie said in a reproachful voice; "but I'm going to stay, and I'm not going to be a tenderfoot very long, either."

"That's the way to talk," said Mr. Winton encouragingly. "I'll give you another chance a month from now, if you want it; but you need n't expect to get by on the same kind of smattering that you offered this time."

Reggie's mother, when she heard of his failure, was indignant. She was convinced that her son was the victim of discrimination or intrigue.

"The idea of all those other boys who are n't nearly so bright as you getting ahead and you being held back!" she exclaimed. Her thin face reddened and her thin lips formed an even straighter and more determined line than usual. "There's some personal prejudice at the bottom of it. I have a great mind to go to Herbert Winton and tell him just what I think."

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"That would be a mistake," said Reggie. "You'd only get him down on me still more."

"Then I think you ought to resign. It's not dignified for you to stay in such an organization. Has that boy, Michael Dorr, that they let in with those other hoodlums, been promoted?"

"Yes."

"And you have n't! Then you certainly must resign. The idea! You mean to say that you're just a private in the ranks, and have to take orders from that fellow?"

"No, it's not as bad as that. He's a second-class Scout, but that does n't make him my superior officer. I see myself being bossed round by that mucker! It's bad enough to have to be bossed by Jim Woods."

"It certainly is," said his mother. "It makes me indignant to think of it. I really think that in self-respect you should resign, Reggie."

"I'll be second-class Scout a month from now, or I'll quit. I won't let them turn me down more than once."



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So Reggie endured whatever further humiliation to his pride receiving first-aid lessons from his uncle entailed. He would not so much have minded his uncle's frequently ironical manner if it had not been for the invariable presence of Michael Dorr; that unwelcome person seemed positively to haunt Dr. Bartlett's study in the evenings. And it exasperated Reggie to observe indications of his uncle's growing regard for Michael. "He makes almost an assistant of him," thought Reggie one evening, when Dr. Bartlett had Michael give a demonstration for the benefit of some newcomers to the class. In disgust and with a desire to free himself as soon as possible from the necessity for further attendance at a class where his sensibilities were continually being outraged, he put his mind on the work, and before long surprised his uncle by his aptitude.

In most of the other requirements for the grade of second-class Scout he soon perfected himself. He had a retentive memory; he had little trouble in mastering the International Morse code for signaling or in learning the

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sixteen principal points of the compass. He satisfied himself that he could build a fire in the open on the windiest day, using not more than two matches, and he earned and deposited a dollar in the local bank. At least his mother assured him that he had earned it; she paid him fifty cents an hour for running the lawn mower and raking the lawn; and promptly upon the expiration of two hours he desisted from his efforts. Certainly, as he reflected, there was no sense in working overtime on a job that the gardener was paid to do anyway.

His weakest points were in woodcraft; he was not very good in tracking or in cooking outdoors or in using a knife or an axe; but in all those matters during the next month he showed improvement, and when the time came for the final tests he was confident that he would pass.

Mr. Winton told him that he would make an opportunity during the Saturday "hike" to examine him in all the required branches. On the evening before, Reggie studied quite as hard as he had ever done for a school ex-

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amination. He was determined not to give the Scout Master any excuse for rejecting him this time.

Nevertheless, it seemed to him a peculiarly ill-omened fact that when the troop started out on its "hike," not only Michael Dorr, but also his objectionable younger brother, who apparently had recovered the full use of his legs, should be among their number. Reggie noted with disgust that the Hilltop and Hollow patrols had begun to mingle indiscriminately, and that even Bill and Freddie greeted young Dorr with a friendly and welcoming spirit. Reggie wondered cynically how after what had passed they could show such a contemptible lack of pride.

Mr. Winton did not put Reggie into a happier frame of mind when he announced to the whole troop that they were to witness "tenderfoot" and second-class Scout tests that afternoon, and named Richard Dorr and Reginald Bartlett as the candidates to be subjected to the tests.

"He'd just like to show me up before the crowd; he'd just like to have me fail!"

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thought Reggie angrily. He determined that when he had won the highest Scout honors that existed, when he had achieved the first-class grade and had been awarded merit badges, he would show his scorn for the organization by tendering his resignation, throwing all the trinkets on the floor at a troop meeting, and stalking gloriously from the room. That would "jar" them; that would upset even Mr. Winton — especially if it were not just a second-class Scout, but a first-class, a regular king of Scouts, that chose to affront them thus. That was just what he would do: he would become as soon as he could a better Scout than Frank or Jim Woods, and then —

His vindictive musings were cut short by the appearance of Mr. Winton at his side, with the remark:

"We may as well save time, Reggie, by conducting part of your examination as we walk along. I'll begin with some first-aid questions: What is the treatment for fainting?"

"The patient should be placed in a lying-

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down position with the head lower than the rest of the body, so that the blood will run into it," said Reggie glibly. "The clothing should be loosened, especially about the neck. If it is indoors, the windows should be opened and any crowd kept back, so that the patient may receive plenty of fresh air. The face and chest should be sprinkled with cold water. Smelling salts or ammonia should be held under the patient's nose. His limbs should be rubbed toward his body. When he has recovered enough to be able to swallow, he should have a stimulant."

"Almost letter perfect," remarked Mr. Winton dryly. "Have you committed the whole Handbook to memory?"

"No," Reggie answered in a grieved voice. "I have just been studying very hard, that's all."

Mr. Winton continued the catechism.

"You certainly are strong on theory, Reggie," he said, when he had finished. "If you make as good a showing in the practical demonstrations, you'll deserve a place at the head of the class."



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Reggie deemed it politic to assume a humility that he was far from feeling.

"I don't know that I'll deserve a place there," he said; "but I do think that this time I ought at least to get by."

Mr. Winton thought that Reggie's disposition had undergone a strange and welcome improvement.

The expedition was the first that the troop as a body had made to the new cabin. The building had indeed been completed only three days before; many of the boys had not yet seen it. When they came within sight of it, some of them ran forward in their eagerness; from others rose exclamations of surprise and delight. "Look at the porch, will you!" "Pretty neat chimney, what?" "Get on to the corners! That's a good job, for sure!"

They prowled around it and inside it, ejaculating with admiration. Michael was standing near his brother when Freddie exclaimed to Bill, loud enough for every one to hear:

"This is such a peach it's really lucky that

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skunk, whoever he was, burned down the other one."

"You bet!" said Bill.

Michael glanced at Dick and saw him redden to the eyes.

Mr. Winton stood up on the broad piazza that was the most notable architectural feature of the new building and tapped on the floor with a stick. The boys gathered round expectantly.

"As you probably all know," said Mr. Winton, "the chief architect and builder of this magnificent edifice is George Newcomb; but he wishes me to say that under his direction alone it could not have taken on its distinction of finish, the touches of elegance such as you observe in the construction of this piazza, in the dovetailing of the corners, and in the pitch of the roof; for all the finer details of craftsmanship George wishes it understood that we are indebted to our new member and leader of the Beaver Patrol, Michael Dorr. So it seems especially fitting that the first ceremony to take place in this new building should be the swearing into

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membership of Michael Dorr's brother, Richard. If he will come forward, I will put him through the examination, and upon his answering satisfactorily to the tests I will administer the Scout oath."

Pale and looking ill at ease, Dick stepped upon the piazza. He answered in a low voice the questions that Mr. Winton put to him until he was asked to repeat the Scout law.

"A Scout is trustworthy," he began, and then he stopped. His eyes rested on Frank Bartlett and Jim Woods, who were standing side by side before him.

"Yes," said Mr. Winton encouragingly. "That's right. 'A Scout is trustworthy.' What next?"

Dick stood silent; his eyes strayed from Frank Bartlett and Jim Woods and rested on his brother's face. Michael was gazing at him with anxious intentness.

Dick turned to Mr. Winton.

"Before I go any further," he said in a voice that was clear and tinged with defiance, "there's one thing you ought to know. I'm the fellow that burned down the cabin."

## X

### THE LAST TEST

THE effect of Dick's declaration was stupefying. The boys gazed in silence with mouths open; even Mr. Winton stood for a moment as if bewildered. But Michael looked at his brother with an expression of relief and affection in his eyes. ‘

“But,” said Mr. Winton, “were n’t you at home with a broken leg when the cabin was burned?”

“No; I broke my leg running away after I set the fire. The three fellows that picked me up and brought me home knew all about it, but they felt sorry for me and decided not to tell.”

“What was your motive in burning the cabin?”

“I had a grudge against some fellows in the Scouts for a thing they’d done to me. I was specially sore against one fellow. It was the

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only way I could think up of getting even."

"Three members of this troop knew what you had done?"

"Yes. They were mighty white to me. I hope I'm not getting them into trouble because they did n't tell."

"No, I guess not. They are the only ones who knew about it?"

"I think my brother suspected; I'm sure he did. I think that's why he was so keen to help in building this cabin."

Michael became instantly the center of interest. Mr. Winton appealed to him.

"Did you have a feeling the way your brother suggests, Michael?"

"I was afraid that Dick had done it," Michael answered, "and I wanted to do what I could to square things for him. I was pretty sure that some time he'd be sorry and want to make things right. That's the way he is," he added, with a pleading note in his voice. "He does things in a temper and then afterwards he — well, he tries to make things right."



## THE LAST TEST

"That's what you're trying to do now, is it, Dick?" Mr. Winton's voice was sympathetic.

"As far as I can, I'd like to make things right," Dick answered in a low tone.

"That feeling on your part seems to me the important thing," said Mr. Winton. "I've hoped from the beginning that the Scouts might put a stop to the feuds between different sections of the town. Certainly there's no room in the Scouts for feuds between members. Are you willing to come in and work in harmony with those fellows against whom you had such a violent grievance?"

Dick hesitated a moment. "I think I could work with them all right if I had to," he said at last. "I know I could with two of them. There's one that I know I could never like."

"I don't believe it's required of us that we should all like one another equally," replied Mr. Winton. "What is required is that — well, it's all contained in the Scout law, which you had begun to recite when

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

you interrupted yourself. Now suppose we get back to the examination. 'A Scout is trustworthy,' you said. I think that in view of what has just passed, no one here will ever have any doubt about you in that respect, Dick."

And suddenly, at that, Frank Bartlett started to clap, and then the others followed him and clapped, too — all except Reggie, who stood in the rear of the crowd with his hands in his pockets.

Dick flushed, his lips quivered, he faced the fellows with tears in his eyes. When the applause ceased, he said in a voice that was not quite steady:

"You fellows don't know what that means to me. All I can say is that if I can pass the Scout test, I'll try to be a Scout of the same sort as those fellows that picked me up and carried me home and forgave me for what I'd done — just the way I hope you'll all forgive me."

They clapped again at that; and then Mr. Winton, with a smile, said:

"'A Scout is trustworthy'; go on, Dick."

## THE LAST TEST

Then in a clear voice Dick recited the rest of the law: "A Scout is loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent." He passed all the other tests readily enough; Mr. Winton administered the Scout oath; and the fellows crowded round to shake hands and congratulate him.

Mr. Winton spied Reggie sauntering off with his hands in his pockets; with a frown on his face he watched him. At a comfortable distance from the congratulating throng, Reggie leaned against a tree and looked off into space.

Mr. Winton drew Dick aside. "There seems to be a welcome for you from practically everybody, as I was sure there would be," he said. "You spoke of three fellows, however, that you had a grudge against. I wish you'd go up to them, shake hands, and start off on a good basis."

"Two of them have come up to me; it's all right with them," said Dick.

"That's good. Go and speak to the third."

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Dick hesitated; he certainly did not relish the task. He stepped down from the piazza and walked over toward Reggie. Mr. Winton strolled after him part way and then stopped and watched him.

Reggie was not at first aware of the approach. When he became conscious of it, he gazed off into space again, with a more distant expression in his eyes than ever. He allowed Dick to come up close to him and still he did not appear to notice him.

"Look here," said Dick in a voice more dogged than amiable, "I'm willing to shake hands if you are."

Reggie looked round, intending to freeze him with disdain. Then in that glance he discovered Mr. Winton's eyes fixed closely upon him.

"Oh!" he said. And he offered Dick a limp hand.

Dick set his lips as if the act he was about to perform summoned all his resolution. He took the limp hand, gave it a sharp downward jerk, dropped it, and turned his back.

## THE LAST TEST

"I could n't see," said Mr. Winton when Dick came up to him, "that there was much enthusiasm on either side."

The reproving comment lost some of its force because of the twinkle of the eyes that accompanied it.

"No," Dick admitted frankly, "there was n't."

"Well, we can't expect readjustments to be successful all at once. A working basis is enough to start with. That means, you will understand, no more enmity — overt or covert."

"I understand," said Dick.

Mr. Winton felt less sure of Reggie. It was with the design of testing and disciplining his spirit that he decided to delegate to another the conduct of part of Reggie's examination. He asked Dick to send Michael to him, and while Dick went off on that errand, he summoned Reggie.

"I'm going to put you in the hands of an expert, so far as judging your ability to wield an axe is concerned," he said. "I'll accept his report on your qualifications. Michael



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Dorr will go with you into the woods and you will do whatever cutting he prescribes."

Reggie's brow grew black.

"Can't you send somebody else?" he asked. "I don't see why I always have that fellow pinned on to me. Uncle George was always doing it when I was having first-aid lessons; I don't see why you should do it now."

"It's natural that we should ask the experienced person to help in training the inexperienced," replied Mr. Winton. "There is no one in the troop better qualified than Michael Dorr to give you suggestions about handling an axe or to judge of your skill. And now let me remind you, Reggie, that a Scout obeys orders cheerfully; he is n't always kicking and complaining. I advise you to get over your sulkiness; it is n't especially wise to show it when you are trying to pass your second-class tests."

Reggie's face did show it unmistakably, nevertheless, as Michael approached.

"Michael," said Mr. Winton, "Reggie here is a candidate for second-class Scout,

## THE LAST TEST

and wants to take the tests to-day. I have n't time to give him all of them, so I'm going to ask you to supervise his work with the axe and report to me on it. You and he can go off in the woods now, and you can require him to do anything in the way of cutting down trees or trimming them that you think is necessary. Then come back and report."

Michael liked the commission as little as Reggie did, but his face betrayed no feeling as he said, "Yes, sir."

"Take your axe, Reggie, and start along."

The two boys walked in silence. Soon they were out of sight of the cabin and out of hearing of the other members of the troop.

"There's a good tree for you to fell," Michael said at last; he pointed to a tall birch that at the base was seven or eight inches in diameter. "See if you can lay it down without its touching either of those spruces."

With a thoroughly sour expression of countenance Reggie set to work. He had delivered only three or four blows when Michael stopped him.

## THE HILLTOP TROOP

"Here, let me show you how to stand." He took the axe out of Reggie's hands and planted himself. "Try that."

"I like my own way better," said Reggie. He resumed chopping in his old position.

"It's not right — more liable to cut yourself. Cut down at more of an angle."

Reggie stopped and glared at him.

"Oh, I know your game!" he cried furiously. "You'll find fault with everything I do — anything to beat me, that's you! I believe it's almost a put-up job between you and Mr. Winton to keep me from being a second-class Scout! Now just keep still, do you hear? I'm going to get this tree down, and do it my own way, and if you report I can't handle an axe I'll know what to think of you — and it won't be much different from what I think now!"

He turned and attacked the tree as savagely as if it had impersonated Michael. He was quite beside himself with wrath; he swung his axe with a rapidity and a violence that he had never achieved before; the chips flew wildly — and then disaster! Swinging

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so furiously, he failed to swing accurately; the axe struck the tree a glancing blow and slipped off against his left leg. With a cry he sank to the ground. Michael sprang forward, and dropping on his knees beside him took off the canvas legging and rolled up the khaki trouser leg, already stained and wet. There, from the middle of a wide gash, spurted the bright-red arterial blood. Reggie had fainted; his face had a pallor that suggested death.

Michael drew out his handkerchief, passed it round the leg and hastily knotted the ends; then he placed his jack-knife between the handkerchief and the inner side of the leg, took from his hip pocket the foot-rule that he always carried, and slipped it under the handkerchief on the outer side of the leg. Twisting the foot-rule round he tightened the handkerchief and caused the knife to make pressure. At once the spurting of the bright-red blood ceased.

Michael fixed the foot-rule so that it would not slip and then shouted for help. He shouted and shouted, but the trees seemed

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to deaden the sound; no answer came from any one.

He took out his first-aid packet and banded the cut. Reggie began to stir and moan. Michael fanned his face with his hat and brought him back to consciousness.

"You're all right," Michael said. "You gave yourself a pretty bad cut and you've got to lie here till help comes."

He looked at his watch; it was half-past twelve. In about half an hour he would loosen the tourniquet. He did not dare to leave Reggie and summon help; the tourniquet might come loose by mischance, and the loss of blood ensuing before help arrived might be fatal.

Reggie was too faint and weak to talk very much. He moaned frequently, however, and several times expressed the belief that he was going to die. He realized from the treatment that Michael had given him that he had cut an artery, and the knowledge frightened him.

"Go and get Uncle George!" he moaned. "Bring Uncle George, quick!"

"I don't dare to leave you," Michael ex-



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plained. "You're all right just now, but if the bandages were to slip — "

"Why does n't some one come! Why does n't some one come!" wailed Reggie. "Do you think any one will ever come?"

Michael assured him that pretty soon the others would wonder what had happened and would organize a search. Reggie lay and moaned.

Half an hour passed; thirty-five minutes. Reggie's leg below the knee had become dead white. Michael loosened the tourniquet for a few moments until the blood flushed the leg, then tightened it up again.

"Everything's all right," Michael assured Reggie; "but there's nothing to do but wait."

In a few minutes he heard shouts, "Hello, there! Hello!"

"Hello!" he shouted in reply. "This way. Help!"

Then Mr. Winton and Frank Bartlett and half a dozen others came running through the woods and Michael's anxiety was over.

Two days after Reggie's accident, Dr.

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Bartlett had an interview with him from which his mother, to her astonishment and somewhat to her indignation, was excluded. When at the end of fifteen minutes Dr. Bartlett emerged from the patient's room, he found his sister-in-law waiting in the hall.

"Now I'll tell you all about it," he said. "Come downstairs where we can talk."

"You're sure Reggie's all right? He won't be lame? There's no danger of blood-poisoning?"

"Reggie will soon be absolutely all right. The bone was n't injured, so he won't be lame. And there's no danger of blood-poisoning. What I've been talking with Reggie about, Nellie, and what I want to talk with you about is Michael Dorr."

They entered the drawing-room and sat down, Dr. Bartlett opposite the portrait of his brother that hung over the mantelpiece.

"Reggie in some ways is beginning to look like his father," he said slowly. "I want to see him grow to be more like his father."

"You mean by that, George, less like me?"

"No, Nellie, no. Of course I don't mean

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that." Dr. Bartlett reached for his sister-in-law's hand and patted it. "It's natural that you should have spoiled Reggie — your only son — all you had after Theodore's death; but now I want to talk straight to you, and you must n't feel hurt. I think that Theodore was about thirteen when he told what I am very sure was his last lie. He threw a stone that broke a window and smashed a valuable vase, and then he denied having done it. Afterwards he learned that another boy had been punished for it. That got home to him. He owned up to what he had done, and, as I say, I don't believe he ever lied again. I told Reggie that story, and I said I hoped he had told his last lie."

"Reggie is perfectly truthful!" exclaimed Mrs. Bartlett indignantly.

"He has just admitted to me that he has n't always been that," replied Dr. Bartlett. "He did n't tell the truth about an encounter he had with Michael Dorr. He has admitted to me that Michael's story of that affair was correct."

"Throwing stones — the horse running

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away!" Mrs. Bartlett's tone was incredulous.

"Yes. Reggie was untruthful about it all; he admits it. He sought to do harm to Michael — and you, because you believed Reggie, sought to do harm to the boy, too; you tried to get him discharged by his employer."

Mrs. Bartlett grew red. "Of course I believed Reggie. I don't understand even now —"

"Well, Reggie's had a lesson. As you know, the boy to whom you and he were so unjust saved his life. Now I'm going to ask you point-blank if you would n't like to do something for that boy — by way of amends, and in recognition of what he did for Reggie?"

Mrs. Bartlett was struggling with mortification, but she answered at once:

"Yes, I do. What would you suggest?"

"The boy wants to be a doctor. He ought to be a doctor. His promptness and resourcefulness in dealing with Reggie's injury are a proof of his aptitude. He's demonstrated that to me in other ways — in the

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first-aid class I've been holding. He ought to go to college and then through medical school, and he has n't any money. If he had three hundred dollars he might reasonably enter college and very likely he could earn the balance of his year's expenses and become self-supporting for the rest of his course. But considering everything — considering that he's saved Reggie to you, for that's what he's done — I should think you might reasonably charge yourself with whatever he needs in the way of funds for his education. From my knowledge of him, I am pretty sure it won't cost you a great deal."

"I will do it, of course," Mrs. Bartlett answered.

After her brother-in-law had gone, she went upstairs and sat with Reggie, and they had a talk of a sort that had never passed between them before, a talk that consisted mainly in rueful confessions and in hopes and promises of amendment. She had been sitting with Reggie for perhaps an hour when word was brought that two boys would like to see her.



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On going downstairs she found Michael Dorr and another boy in the hall. Both boys looked very serious.

"This is my brother, Dick, Mrs. Bartlett," Michael began abruptly. "He's made up his mind he wants to tell you something, and he thought he'd like to have me with him while he did it."

"I'm glad to see you both," Mrs. Bartlett said, with a graciousness that amazed them. "Come in and sit down."

In the atmosphere of unfamiliar magnificence, sitting in a chair more luxurious than any he had ever before occupied, and feeling more acutely miserable than he had ever been in his life, Dick explained his visit.

"I came because I've decided I ought to tell you, Mrs. Bartlett, I was the fellow that tore your garden all to pieces last summer. I know you've got a right to have me arrested for it, but I hope maybe you'll let me work it out for you instead."

"But why should you have wanted to do such a thing?"

"I had an idea of somehow getting even.

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I felt you and Reggie had been mean to Michael here, and I had it in for you."

"What makes you come and tell me about it?"

"Well, I've joined the Scouts, and it did n't seem as if I ought to go along without telling such a thing and trying to square up for it. You know, it's the kind of thing a Scout would n't do."

"What idea have you of making up for it?"

"I thought maybe I could do jobs around your place for you out of school hours and then next summer do work in the garden."

Mrs. Bartlett was silent for a few moments. Then she said:

"I don't see why that could n't be arranged." She paused and looked from one boy to the other reflectively. "If you feel you ought to make this reparation for the wrong you did to me, what reparation do you think I ought to make for the wrong I did to your brother?"

Michael and Dick stirred uneasily; they did not understand her and they made no response.

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"I have learned only to-day," she said, addressing Michael, "that Reggie — that your story — that I should have accepted your account of how the horse came to run away." She flushed; it was hard for her to express the thing without wincing. "I have not only an injustice to atone for, but a debt of gratitude to pay. Dr. Bartlett has suggested to me a way of doing it. He says you want to go to college and study medicine. Well, you shall. You saved my boy's life, and you must let me help you now so that later you can save other lives."

Then, while Michael and Dick sat speechless and amazed, she did a thing unexpected, spontaneous: she rose and coming over to Michael bent and kissed him.

"And you, Dick," she said, and now the voice that was usually so even and controlled shook a little. "I think you can make better use of your time than in the way you suggested. Thank you, my boy, just the same."

From a window she watched the two brothers while they walked down to the gate; she felt an indescribable envy for them and

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yearning toward them, something utterly new and unexperienced. As they turned at the gate she caught the light of gladness on their faces.

Then she went upstairs to have another talk with Reggie.

THE END











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